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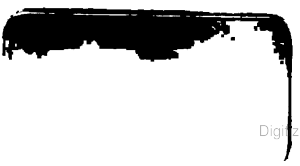
The case of Paul Breen

Anthony Tudor, L.C. Page and Company,
C.H. Simonds Company, Colonial Press (Boston, Mass.)

KD 13079



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"THE SIDE-DOOR OPENED SOFTLY . . . AND ADOLPH BREEN STOOD BEFORE HER" (*see page 144*).

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THE CASE OF PAUL BREEN

By

Anthony Tudor, LL.B.

Illustrated by
Henry Roth

Boston ::: L. C. Page & Company ::: Mdcccxi

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THE CASE OF PAUL BREEN

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF JOHN STRAIN

ABIGAIL ALICE HAZLETT, the Judge's only child, hurried from the front window, opera-glass in hand, and peered curiously over the circular balustrade.

She had espied from afar, coming across the park, and now watched passing through the hall to the library, the new student, John Strain — tall, burly, vigorous, fresh from the country; with rugged countenance and fierce blue eyes under a mass of unruly yellow hair — the very exemplification of health, energy, will, strength, in fine, of all the qualities that she admired and envied because she had them not.

Abigail Alice was sallow and sickly. Discontent had laid heavy lines across her face. Her sparse

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hair, tautly drawn above her ears, gave promise of settled spinsterhood. Though the petted and pampered daughter of Hamlin's foremost man, she already knew the agonies of neglect. While she had waited and hoped, her girl associates had been chosen; while she had dreamed in vain, their dreams had been realized. Invalidism had not developed true womanliness in her; it had made her both sensitive and selfish. The more patent her defects, the more imperious became her desires. Alone much of the time, reading avidly and indiscriminately, she fretted under the disappointment of ideals proving mere mirages, until the coming of this new student widened and lightened her horizon.

Though she had met him only once or twice, and that within a few days, her fancy multiplied indefinitely both time and opportunity. There had been, before his arrival, other students, anemic, bespectacled, predestined for early practice before the Great Assizes; but the contemptuous indifference with which she had treated these deserted her in the presence of John Strain. The grasp of his great hand oppressed her mind long after her fingers had ceased tingling. Her nerves quivered in response to the careless force of his personality; her eyes lowered before the normal power of his gaze, and memory but intensified their influence. Here, at

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length, was a man fit to be, fit to do; a viking, a conqueror, knowing and taking his own. Weakness paid tribute to strength, sentimentality to logical purpose; and Abigail Alice Hazlett was fascinated.

She had observed him closely from the window as he came from the office on some commission for her father, his coat flying, his hands and feet swinging and thumping; brushing aside passers-by instead of turning out for them, bursting his way through the park as he would surely burst it through life. He was so natural, so sufficient, so absolutely free from artificial defences — no wonder the girl was absorbed. Would he not love as he lived, and serve as he loved? And so, she waited, eagerly, patiently, by the balustrade, for a parting glimpse when he should pass out.

The library door shut with a slam that jarred the house. Abigail Alice leaned over, her tremulous hands clutching the rail. The opera-glass slipped. It fell, eluding her miserable, her ineffectual fingers. It shot down and smashed on the marble pavement, just grazing the prominent nose and chin that gave so much individuality to the student's face.

John Strain looked down and scowled; he looked up and smiled patronizingly, as at a mischievous child. "A miss is as good as a mile," he said, dismissing the incident with a shrug.

Abigail Alice faltered, pale, despairing. Was this

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the end before there had been a beginning? Must she be ignored, before she had been understood? With a sudden resolve, she hastened down the broad stairway. She snatched a rose from the cluster at her belt and handed it to him. "*This* is what I meant to throw to you," she whispered; and back she tripped, prettier for the moment than ever before or afterward.

Strain gazed stupidly on the flower; then he thrust it into his pocket. "Thanks," he shouted, saluting with two fingers.

He walked away slowly through the park. His errand was over, he was free for the afternoon. But there was thinking for him to do, and, with him, thinking was a serious matter. No inspiration ever favored this young man with its magic. Whatever his mind evolved was wrought as from harsh, reluctant iron. So he sat himself on a secluded bench, and hammered out painfully from past and present his all-important future.

Thus far there had been no positive feminine influence in Strain's life. Once and again, it is true, a woman had tempted him momentarily from his path; but that path had not swerved a hair's-breadth in its direction for her smile or word. To him, woman was a negligible quantity, a concomitant of a household, perhaps, but never a comrade, and, above all, never a counsellor. What he was to be,

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that he would be, by and through himself. Afterward, as he might have a fast horse, a fine home, so, too, might he have a wife. That was all there was about it.

Now, however, he saw advantage, and facts supplied the lack of imagination. The Judge's daughter, whom the men in the office described as so haughty and disagreeable, had gone out of her way to honor him. This was much, but there was more, far more. What had she been doing at the balustrade with the opera-glass in her hand? Had he not noticed the flitting of a white form from the window as he came up the walk to the house? She had watched his coming and was awaiting his going — that was it! Why?

Because, of course, like any other girl, she had taken a liking to him. He had had his experiences; he could see through a mill-stone as well as another. Very well then; since such were the conditions, he would draw fair, rational conclusions from them. As if from a high tower, he saw the prospect before him.

As if from a high tower, John Strain saw favor and merit combine to give him success. He saw himself win and wed the Judge's daughter, with the Judge's consent. He saw himself become the Judge's confidential clerk and then the Judge's partner. He saw the Judge, an elderly man already,

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grow more aged and feeble. John Strain now occupies the Judge's private office, and takes the Judge's chair at the board of the bank directory, and collects the rents and interest from the houses and securities that the Judge had builded and accumulated, while the Judge sleeps with his fathers. Then follow notable victories before the bar, of which he is the acknowledged leader, and yet the prospect is widening. There are public services well rendered, there is political work shrewdly done. His foot is on the ladder of fame; he is mounting, ever mounting. First, district attorney, then Governor of the State; why may not the people call him higher, even to the Presidential chair?

Well, indeed, did facts with their deductions serve John Strain in place of imagination; and well content was he with the picture — though sitting in the background, in the background always, but always there, was the unamiable, unattractive figure of Abigail Alice Hazlett, to whom this glory must primarily be due.

But was there anything, was there anybody, that might prevent these facts from working out their logical conclusions? No Alnaschar was John Strain. If his basket of china were imperilled it would not be from his own unguarded movement. Rather, far rather, he was alert, prepared, to fend off any danger, whatever its source or nature.

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Facing, then, the inevitable, he answered both questions affirmatively, yet with a dogged shake of the head.

Yes; there was something, the memory of which filled him with mortification. He had been indiscreet. He had gone on a midnight frolic, and, to appease the scruples of his companion, Mary Lane, had uttered vows of marriage in the presence of a witness.

Yes; there was some one who might be an obstacle; yes, indeed, there was. Mary was still living in the village where they both had been born; she believed in him and was waiting for him; within the week he had been with her, and she had talked of the time when they should be known as man and wife.

All this was bad. John Strain groaned as he admitted it; but what about the other side, the winning side? Well, the only witness to that foolish transaction was dead. Mary herself was of little account; her only relative, an aunt, poor and unrespected, her own reputation injured by natural frivolity.

Granted, then, that he as a lawyer knew that pledge had constituted a lawful marriage under the statutes of the State; what of it? Mary Lane did not know it; she had cavilled, hesitated, almost refused to consider it sufficient. So much the better

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his knowing; since knowledge, exclusive knowledge, was power. So he debated, so he decided; not mitigating the cruel, cowardly wrong, but accepting it as the one and only means to the one and only end — his successful career.

The sunlight, sifting through the interlacing branches overhead, yielded a little to a shadow. John Strain looked up from his cogitations. The woman whom he had determined to repudiate stood beside him.

"Oh, John," cried Mary Lane, her pretty face all aglow with joy, "I am so glad to see you. When I came to town for a bit of shopping, I was hoping that we might meet."

"Yes," returned Strain, "it is pleasant to see an old friend from home."

"A friend, John?"

"Well, acquaintance, then, if you like that better."

"Acquaintance!"

"Sit down," he commanded, shortly. "I want to talk seriously with you. You're not a fool, though the Lord knows you've often acted foolishly enough."

A dull grayness drove the roses from Mary Lane's face, and, as she sat on the edge of the bench, she drew her wrap closely about her as if she were cold. "What is it, John?" she faltered. "I don't understand you."

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He looked her steadily, strongly, in the eyes. "I have been planning my career," he answered slowly. "It will be a difficult one at best; with you, it would be impossible. 'Acquaintance' was the proper word, for that is the most you can ever be to me."

"But I am your wife, we were married, you know we were," cried the girl, in high, piercing tones.

"Nonsense, utter nonsense," Strain retorted, frowning heavily. "It was a lark; you know it was only a lark; why, you said so yourself. Now, listen; this is the last time I'll ever talk it over with you. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, between us. I was only easing you along, and you knew that, too; you know you did. Don't tell me; what business did you have to go with me in the first place? You have no proof; Remsen is dead; there is no other witness; what, then, can you do? Tell your lies, if you like, you can't hurt me. Do you think your word could stand against mine? Do you suppose people would believe that I would throw away everything for your sake, and without it being necessary either? Oh, no, no, my lady; they know you too well; there have been too many tales about you for that."

"John, John, as I live, before Almighty God, you are the only one —"

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"Very well; let it go at that; I've no wish to disparage you. But, if I'm attacked, I shall fight, and then you'll see —"

"But John, dear John, you don't understand, you don't know what I'm beginning to fear —"

"I don't want to know. A woman, who doesn't have her way, always fears. That for your whimsies!" and he snapped his fingers.

Mary gasped and sank back, silent, benumbed, her emotions paralyzed by the unyielding, insistent obduracy of the man. Then her natural gaiety asserted itself, urged on by that poor pride which so often masquerades as self-respect.

She sprang to her feet and tossed her head in a reckless fashion. "Don't worry, you poor fellow," she said, "it might make you ill. I don't amount to much, as you say, but I won't give folks the chance to say what they already think. Perhaps you're right, too. Perhaps I didn't believe. But I hoped, John; I hoped, because I was fond of you. Yes, I'll go my way, though God only knows where it may lead" — and she laughed as those laugh, too sorrowful, too desperate, to weep. "I'll go my way, and you and your career will be safe for all of me. Perhaps in the end you may be no better off than I for this wicked, base beginning!"

There was ordinarily nothing impressive about Mary Lane's rather vapid prettiness; but, as she

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"SHE SLOWLY STRODE AWAY."

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slowly strode away, the flash of her eyes, the poise of her head, the carriage of her form, reflected, faintly, evanescently, the grandeur of a passion, unblunted by outrage, unalloyed by selfishness.

Strain watched her moodily as she passed down the path, as her stateliness dwindled in the distance, as there came to her closely wrapped figure that pathetic little stop which so clearly tells that the heart is bleeding. He took the rose from his pocket, and tore it savagely into bits.

"Damn life!" he muttered; "it's nothing but a fight! There must be the killed and the missing!"

But he never hesitated in his purpose. His mind was too single, too self-contained, for reflections which itself had pronounced idle.

As if Mary Lane had never existed, he paid persistent court to the Judge's daughter. These attentions were graciously received. The Judge himself, already impressed by Strain's qualities, gave ready assent. Within the year, the marriage took place.

Truly, it might have been that Mary Lane had never existed; for, as Strain put her out of his mind, so, too, did she drop out of his life. He never saw her, he never heard from her. In his infrequent visits to the village of their birth her name was rarely mentioned, and then only in a slighting way as of one whose death or disappearance is no loss. From being a casual memory, she faded into a

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chance recollection; finally, her pretty face was completely hidden behind the clouds of time.

But the figure in the background did not fade; it grew more and more prominent from its immobility. What was unattractive and unamiable, even though softened by the first glow of womanly hopes, became more and more unattractive and unamiable when those hopes were blighted by consistent indifference.

Abigail Alice Strain only too soon came to realize that she was a necessary concomitant to her husband's career, but never his comrade, and, above all, never his counsellor or friend. The strength, the forcefulness, the fitness to be and to do, from which she had fondly argued love and service, were in no wise devoted to so negligible a quantity as herself. This knowledge made her bitter, though she would not, if she could, have changed her lot. There was something in her rights as a wife that gratified her. There she was, there she would remain. At least, while he was hers, he was no other's. A sense of ownership, of possession, developed with the years, and, in its turn, produced a jealousy that fed upon itself. That she found no cause for suspicion was a stronger reason for greater suspicion. As, that day, she had espied him coming to the house through the park, so now she covertly watched him as he advanced upon his career, finding, if not de

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light, at least sufficient occupation in tantalizing her spirit with theories and situations, imaginary, but yet possible, and therefore worthy of a reckoning. That she thus contended against a state of absorption in material matters, the human condition least fecund of intrigue, while it did not disconcert her purpose, did render her aspirations the more base and degenerate; until, if their real motives could have been demonstrated from disordered thought and action, it would have appeared as shame for him and even for herself.

But in this state of selfish absorption, John Strain gave no heed to his wife's mental or spiritual processes. He knew only that she was the more disagreeable, and so, as she had feared he would do when he had waved away the dropping of the opera-glass, he pushed her from consideration with a shrug of his broad shoulders. She had served his purpose; and he, on his part, was ready to fulfil his side of the bargain. With a comfortable home, with servants and horses at her command, and nothing to do, what more could a woman want? He had no time to waste over abstractions.

John Strain's life was, indeed, busy. As one may have recourse to a prophylactic, so did he find assurance in work. He was a painstaking lawyer, preparing his cases to the last possible contingency, and then hewing his way through legal thickets,

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as if embodying the pioneer spirit of a new world. He was a student of literature, a lover of books, tracing out rare editions, elucidating mooted historical points, indexing, cross-referencing, finding relaxation in what might well have been a sole and serious occupation. From law-office to court-room, from court-room to library, was the circuit at which he practised continuously; and not once did a woman's smile or word draw him from it or change its direction an iota.

And men, though they did not know him intimately, respected him, saying that he was honest, competent, independent, brave; himself by his living fixing the standard by which he judged his fellows. Local pride was his; and his coldness, his reserve, did him no harm. Rather did they preserve him intact for opportunity; for intimacy in public life often breeds contempt. And so, slowly, steadily, he worked out the career that evident facts in the place of fancy had demonstrated for him; unaware, happily, of the deductions that other facts, mightier if less patent, were logically, pitilessly, drawing for his weal or woe.

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CHAPTER II

EXIT MARY LANE

On the evening after her heartless rejection by John Strain, Mary Lane sat in the upper story of a small frame house, in the mountain village of their birth, with her elbows resting on a little table. At her feet was a small cloth-case fastened by a shawl-strap. Upon the bed, beside her, lay her hat and a stout jacket, both dark and of plain material. She was absolutely still, except that now and then she walked to her window and looked up and down the street. It was about nine o'clock, and the street was almost deserted, except for an occasional group of passers-by — usually a young man and girl, or two or three young men. Sleep hovered early in the village; and at eleven all was quiet, except on the rare occasions when a church sociable or a stereopticon lecture tempted the inhabitants to late hours. Mary was watching the lights in the neighboring houses, and remained at her station for over an hour, making no sound except now and then a long, quivering sigh, wholly involuntary.

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At length, the last light, that in the minister's study, was suddenly extinguished, and she rose softly to her feet, went to the door, opened it, listened intently for a few moments, and then returned. She put on her jacket, adjusted her hat before the uneven mirror that hung above the washstand, picked up the cloth-case, and stole on tiptoe down the stairs, pausing whenever they creaked. When she reached the lower hallway, she laid a note on the table standing against the wall, and then cautiously opened the front door. As she stepped out, a big, black dog came growling around the corner of the house; but, as he sniffed at her dress, he whined and wagged his tail. Mary dropped the cloth-case, and, throwing her arms around the dog's neck, began to cry, but without making an unnecessary sound. The dog whimpered responsively, and she quieted him by caresses. At length she rose, stamped her foot on the grass, and thus drove him back to his kennel. As he went reluctantly, she picked up the case again, and walked rapidly toward the road.

Keeping in the shadow of the houses, Mary passed along the village street, her long, swinging stride soon bringing her to the open country. At first, she had held her head bent forward, but now she gradually raised it, until she was erect and seemed defiant, so far as an attitude can tell the mental state;

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but the change in her pose may have been merely the result of her more rapid pace.

Only once did she speak aloud, and that was when she turned to look back at the town she was leaving. As she resumed her walk, she said: "Let them think what they like."

After two or three hours, Mary came to a bridge that crossed a river. There she left the road, and made her way through the bushes to the river bank, which she followed for a few rods. Then she stopped and searched about with her hands until she felt a chain that was padlocked to a willow leaning over the water. This was fastened to a flat-bottomed scow, which she drew to the shore. Then, putting in her baggage, she took a key from her bosom, unfastened the chain, and pushed off. She sat on the middle thwart, took up the oars, and rowed away, helped by the current, for she was going down stream.

About three o'clock in the morning, Mary turned toward shore, and, when she had landed, deliberately took off her hat and jacket, though the night was cold, threw them into the boat, and then pushed it as far as she could into the river, where it floated off down the rapid current. Then, opening the case, she drew out another hat and jacket and laid them on the ground beside her. This second hat was a true country-milliner's "confection," being conspic-

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uous by brightness of ribbons and wealth of red feathers, and the jacket, also, was much more showy than that she had sent adrift, being adorned with large, brass buttons. Next, she took a pair of shears from the case, let down her hair, and clipped off the long locks close to her head. Then, after looking carefully about, and listening, she lighted a bit of candle, and, using a small pocket mirror, placed a slender strip of black silk around one of her front teeth, which thus appeared to have been lost. Having put on the hat and jacket, and extinguished the light, she made her way toward a clump of woods on the outskirts of the large town near which she had landed and, concealing herself in the underbrush, remained hidden, sleeping uneasily, now and then, until she heard the discordant blasts of the whistles calling the mill-hands to work. Then, walking with a marked limp in her gait, she entered the town, and went circuitously through side-streets to the railway station. There, having for a few moments studied the time-table posted on the wall, she bought a ticket and took a westward train, apprehensive still of discovery, yet hopeful that through her precautions she had avoided recognition.

Poor Mary might have been less timorous and cautious had she realized how small and fleeting would be the eddies of her disappearance. The

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scow, containing her hat and jacket, was picked up, that morning, and identified by its owner, who said he had rented it for a week to a young woman, named Mary Lane, who had paid him in advance. Gossips at the post office in the village whispered that the girl was missing, and the local paper at the end of the week announced that she had "gone to parts unknown, after leaving a note for her aunt declaring that she would no more trouble any one." Surmise soon exhausted itself between suicide and scandal, and then the unsolved mystery was by general consent put out of consideration. Even Mary's aunt was not inconsolable, as may be seen by her summary of the affair, delivered to a particular crony over a special brew of tea.

"I can tell *you*, Eliza," said the worthy woman, "for you're close-mouthed like me. The fact is that she was keeping steady company with young Strain. A fine, promising young fellow, too, same as his father was. You remember him? Well, I could see with half an eye that Mary set a lot more store on him than he did on her. I warned her that John wasn't the kind to settle down here. But she wouldn't hearken to me, young things won't, you know. So, when John came to say good-by, I wasn't surprised. I knew he meant to go to the city to study law, and that there would be an end on't. But Mary took it so quiet that I didn't suspect

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anything, though I might have known she was all cut up. She's got grit like her father, and wouldn't talk to me, though I led her on more'n once. Well, then, she left. I don't believe she meant to kill herself; but either the water tempted her, bein' low in her mind, or she jest run away — she always was a-thinkin' more of the wonders of the world than the work in hand. I s'pose it might have been different if her mother had lived — we never did make out as well as some. She favored her father's folks, which I couldn't abide. Of course, I hope nothin' has happened to her, but, now she's gone without fault of mine, I feel I've done my full duty by her, and — well — I was always the kind that didn't mind being alone. My ways is my ways, and they ain't nobody else's. You understand, don't you?"

Mary Lane, unconscious how rapidly oblivion was settling over her memory, traveled all that day and night. On the train she made acquaintance with the mother of a family of emigrants — the wife of an Englishman who had a small ranch to which she was bringing their three children. It was the second time this woman had made the journey, and she, unlike many Englishwomen, proved talkative and friendly. Mary, who had now ventured to remove the patch from her front tooth, was, in spite of her closely cropped hair, still a very

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bright and attractive girl, and she showed herself so helpful with the rosy-faced, restless children that their mother was glad to give the benefit of her knowledge in return. From her, then, Mary learned enough of the various stations along the line of the railway, to decide to leave the train at Kenyon, a thriving town in Kansas, where she was advised she might readily find work.

Mary Lane felt more grief at parting with her train-acquaintances than she had felt in leaving her aunt's home. They had occupied her mind, diverting her thoughts from herself. Now those thoughts returned, indefinite, insinuating, threatening, she knew not what. Work was a necessity, not only because her little store of money was nearly exhausted, but more, far more, because she feared that, should she remain idle, she must go mad. This secret conviction stirred her to an activity to which her natural buoyancy gave zest. Before night, she had found a place as waitress in a small commercial hotel. In her precautions against discovery she had decided to change her name; and so Mary Lane became "Mary Blake," and began her new employment the next day.

The advent of Mary Blake did not diminish the popularity of the hotel. She was bright, pretty, and reckless enough to seem jolly. The waitresses liked her because she was so anxious to do more than

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her share; while the traveling young men found her ready talk attractive. Indeed, a feverish activity inspired Mary, making her forgetful of both past and future, and binding her close to the present.

One night, during the first week, she was sent to wait on the table for a late arrival. He was a short, thick-set man, with a keen blue eye, and a mouth that seemed ever ready to turn up at one corner in a quizzical smile. He began to speak as soon as she came in.

"And now," he said, as if talking to himself, "why can't they come at regular hours, instead of dropping in when all the dishes are washed and we're just settling down to a bit of embroidery. Just like these men-folk — expecting hot meals at all hours!"

"It's nothing, sir, I'm sure," said Mary, laughing at his odd way. "You've called for nothing but poached eggs and toast, and a cup of coffee."

The man looked sharply at her. Then his tone changed, as he said seriously, "You're new here?"

Mary nodded as she arranged the table.

"I didn't notice at first," he continued. "I've often been coming through here lately, and thought I knew you all. You mustn't mind my blarney; sure I've kissed the stone."

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"Then you've seen Blarney Castle?" Mary asked. "I'd like to travel. I've never been anywhere."

"Now, that's strange," the man reflected, while his mouth twisted up into its half-smile, "I've always been everywhere. It's the plain truth. I must have been born under a shooting-star. My birthplace is not twenty miles from Blarney Castle, and I ran away from home three times before I was twelve — it's in the blood. Once I went on a deep-sea voyage, once to London, once across the Channel. And I've been running away ever since. Well, it's the old proverb that's come true with me, for devil a bit of moss have I gathered."

"You don't seem discouraged," Mary said with an answering smile to the frank face opposite.

"Never a mite. My mother worried over me till she found out 'twas no use, and that I was never happy except when in trouble; so she gave me her blessing and bade me go. 'Sure this blessed land is too small and quiet for the likes of you,' she said. And so I shipped for South America, was wrecked, lived on a desert island for a week, — and precious little dessert too, to say nothing of the lack of a solid meal, — and then was rescued and carried to the West Indies. Then to New Orleans, St. Louis, New York, and so out west. Since that time I find myself half-Irishman, half-westerner."

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"Can I get you anything more?" Mary asked, feeling that she ought to get back to the kitchen.

"You'd rather see me eat than hear me talk," he retorted; "now, that won't do; I seldom find a good listener like you. So you are hungry for travel, are you? That sort of draws us together, we're so different! I've seen them all — Peru, China, Turkey — while you, I wager, never got beyond the pages of your geography at school. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, sir; I've always been curious about foreign countries, and I've been nowhere. And now, I should like to go far, far away, to the ends of the earth."

"I know that feeling; it fairly tingles your toes, doesn't it? But you're from the East, aren't you?"

"Yes," Mary answered hurriedly, provoked that she should have inadvertently expressed her secret longing. "But there must be something else you'd like. You've taken a light supper for a hungry man. Let me get you another cup of coffee."

"I'll not say no to that; the coffee is good here."

When Mary went to the kitchen, she described the guest and made inquiries about him. "Oh, that's Neil Breen," cried one of the waitresses; "nobody's enemy if not his own."

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"What do you mean? He doesn't look like a drinking man."

"Not now," explained the girl; "though they do say there was a time when he crooked his elbow more than was good for him, or any one else that got in his way. But there's no stay to him. He's smart enough, and might amount to something if he could only settle down long enough to leave a foot-print. He's never quiet, though, and spends his money faster than he makes it. Fine-looking man, isn't he?"

"He looks good-natured," Mary answered as she turned toward the dining-room door.

"Oh, he's good-natured enough when he isn't crossed," retorted the other.

"Thank you," said Breen, as Mary put down the cup. "And what did they tell you of me? Nothing bad, I hope?"

"What would you give to know?"

"I do know, as if I had listened at the key-hole, and it's all true, too, worse luck. I'm a thriftless, wandering Irish lad, with a smiling mug and an empty pocket. But there's many a heavier purse carried by a sadder face." Then he became serious. "You must not mind what they tell you. The day may come when Neil Breen will have the laugh on his side. It isn't always the stick in the mud that makes the gold-headed cane. Where is your table?"

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"My table is the one in the corner," Mary answered.

"Then that's the place for me to-morrow morning. I'm an old traveler and I know when I'm well off. Good-night, my girl, good-night."

Neil came down early to breakfast, and talked with Mary in the same voluble style; though now his questions evinced a strong desire for a better acquaintance. During the two days of his stay at the hotel he sought her out in every possible way; and, indeed, the other girls were playfully jealous of his interest in the newcomer. When he left, he shook her warmly by the hand, telling her that he hoped to see her bright eyes soon again, though, sure, he'd carry the memory of them away with him.

Within the week Neil returned and this time his attentions were plainly evident. Mary was at once alarmed and tempted. That indefinite fear from which she had striven to flee warned her that she should not; yet an irrepressible, innate hopefulness, that will-o'-the-wisp which thus far had been the only guide of her life, kept whispering back that she would. Mary was ignorant, young and ignorant, as yet skeptical of the ruthlessness of nature, as yet steadfast to the instinct that the way to avoid an unpleasant situation is to ignore it. "Why not?" she asked herself defiantly; "there is no reason,

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none, none!" And, the next time she saw Breen, she smiled more charmingly upon him.

The man was fascinated, hot with love; and took the first opportunity, when they were alone, to make a formal proposal. There was something in his halting words, so vibrant with truth and sincerity, that quivered the girl's heart; and she bowed her head, the tears stealing through her white fingers.

"Don't, my dear," said Neil Breen. "You mustn't worry your little soul over something or other that's nothing to me and nothing to you. I'm asking for your hand with your heart, not your history inside of it. Sure, a pretty girl like you must have had her lovers; and, as for me, a sailor's no sailor, unless he's left a sweetheart in every port 'round the world. But now I'm in earnest for the first time; so I ask no more than 'Will you love me true, through black and blue, with honor due, my darling Sue?'"

Mary's gay humor returned; her reckless spirit shone mischievously from her eyes, and gave an inspiring toss to her head.

"We'll leave the blackness all behind us," she cried, "and only our skies shall be blue. You are good to me, so good to me, I'll never forget it! Yes, I will go with you, willingly, gladly; and the further you wander, the better I'll like it. At least

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I'll be a faithful wife to you, Neil, ah, so faithful and true, and who knows but the luck will change, and you will find fortune, and I shall find happiness?"

The hotel people were delighted with this rapid wooing, and did all in their power to make the wedding jolly. And so, without further ado, these two waifs, drifted together from out of the unknown through the mighty force of unseen currents, embarked confidently, buoyantly in a slighter craft than those that they now abandoned. But safety is not entirely a matter of precautions; and sometimes the sea continues so serene that it seems that the gales have forgotten how to beat and the storms how to rage.

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CHAPTER III

THE BREEN FAMILY

ONE evening, soon after his marriage, Neil Breen came home to the small hotel in a southwestern town, where he had deposited his wife for safe keeping, in a state of exultant excitement, which he vainly strove to suppress. "I have found out something about you, Mary," he began gravely.

Mary's face turned white, and she sat silent; but he went on unheeding. "You're a mascot," he exclaimed; "a regular A 1, first chop, clipper-built mascot, my dear, that's what you are. There never was a more reckless marriage than ours — I could hardly see a week's board ahead out of this haphazard, go-between, cover-the-ground business of mine, with a slip-up at one end and a throw-down at the other, as a general rule; but now we're fixed, settled, landed on the sunny side, and back from the road, for life. You're a mascot, I say."

"Do you mean, Neil, that you have been successful in some of your prospecting? Oh, that's too good to be true."

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"More than that, colleen; and the truer it is the better it is. I've clinched and copper-fastened the deal of my life, and to-morrow it's ho! for Gloriosa and the Gloriosa mine."

"But you said that was no good," Mary objected.

"That was last week. This week, 'tis a good thing, and we're pushing it along for all we're worth, and next week," — he sank his voice to a whisper — "if next week the Gloriosa isn't a bonanza, then I'm a Dutchman, and I can't say more than that."

"But you don't own the mine, dear?"

"Not all of it; if I did you'd be eating off gold plate in a month. But I've some few shares, and I'm promised the place of manager at a salary that will keep the wolf so far from the door you'll never hear his howls, my dear."

"It pleases me so," murmured Mary. "I seem to see that all I dared to hope is coming true. Do you remember — "

"I remember you hoped you'd change my luck," he interrupted, "and it's all come true like gospel. Look here now." He drew from his inside vest-pocket a roll of bills, and separated two crisp ones from the rest. "There," he continued, handing them over, "for your trousoo, my darlint. I'm sorry it comes after the wedding instead of

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before it, but it's better late than never, so it is."

Mary looked at the bills in amazement. There was a large "C" in the corner of each of them. "Two one-hundred dollar bills!" she exclaimed; "why, I never saw so much money before! Oh, I can't take them."

"Whisht," said Neil, drawing out the roll again, "if I didn't clean forget there's luck in odd numbers. Here's another one to bring the two up to the proper mark."

He rattled on, telling all the particulars of his successful deal, finding supreme satisfaction in his sanguine words, and never noting that his wife gave little heed. She was persuading herself that this surprising change in their fortunes was an omen of still more surprising and enduring felicity; she was realizing, dimly, questioningly, yet rapturously, that her husband's simple faith and affection would prove an ample shield against the fears that had beset her. "Oh, you dear," she cried suddenly, throwing her arms around his neck, in a burst of heartfelt contrition, "I do love you, I do!"

Mr. and Mrs. Breen, the next day, arrived at a new but bustling little town, evidently of recent prosperity. Even from the platform it was possible to see the activity that promised a future. Skeleton buildings in process of construction were visible on

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all sides. There were one or two tall chimneys that yet retained the bright red of freshly-laid bricks. The streets seemed too small for the traffic. New houses and stores stood upon dirt-roads, with sidewalks of aged planks. The sign on the station — the station itself — was new. And the name "Gloriosa" shone resplendent in new gold-leaf, on a brand new sign-board.

Neil called a ramshackle vehicle, and they drove to a new hotel in a new street. When he signed his name on the register, the young clerk hastened to put on a coat, and came forward smiling a welcome.

"We've got your rooms ready on the first floor, Mr. Breen," he said. "You'll have to make allowances, of course. We opened only a week ago, and the wheels don't go round quite smoothly yet. This way, please, if you and your lady will follow me."

Neil Breen soon proved himself invaluable to the mine-owners. Not only did he acquaint himself with the nature of the mine, and its product, but also studied its business management in every detail, and, what was more vital, in every wholesale view as well. Even if he could have been replaced in these capacities, he yet had a more exceptional claim upon his business associates. Every business depends finally upon the disposition of the human

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souls engaged in it. If the workers be sullen, hostile, distrustful, dishonest, they can, and usually do, wreck the whole enterprise. No dead rules can bind the human soul; and, merely as an economic asset, the good will of the worker is a main factor in every success. Breen was, like all good Irishmen, intensely human. He knew the men by names, not by number. He knew when to drive, when to lead, when to resist, and when to yield. Capable himself, he knew and recognized capability in others. No miner, engineer or superintendent worked under Breen; all worked with him, sharing a pride in the Gloriosa mine and a satisfaction in its advancing fortunes.

Mary was soon triumphantly established in a new home of her own, with a social position almost dizzy in its unaccustomed flatteries and deferences. As the days rolled by, each one leaving her wifehood the more honored, the more secure, she forgot the fears that had pictured her marriage as the taking of a desperate chance. Ever a child of the present, undisciplined, buoyant of spirit, vigorous of health, governed by impulses, kindly, generous, yet incapable of the self-sacrifice of principle, she was happy in the brief sunshine of prosperity, unmindful of the darkness that had preceded and might succeed it.

And yet, when she became the mother of a son,

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she sobbed away her heart on Neil's breast with such abjectness that he marveled at her sensibility. "'Tis holy you are to me now," he vowed, soothing her emotions with such supreme pride and delight that soon her eyes again were shining joyously through their tears.

Maternity developed Mary. The child was puny at birth, and for long did not thrive. He was an eerie little being, who looked shrewdly about him as if weighing the gravity of existence, and finding it upon the whole overpowering. Only the mother's devotion, tireless, sleepless, fiercely jealous of its natural rights, battling against death with primeval instincts, kept the flickering breath within the little one. Yet, when the fight seemed most hopeless, she showed little emotion, her faithfulness springing less from affection than from an almost morbid anxiety to do full duty by her child.

The long battle ended in a hard-won victory. The boy lived and was duly christened Paul. As often happens, with the illness he acquired a wiry strength one would hardly expect in so frail a body. His mind, too, proved clever and keen. Though unusually silent for a little chap, he could talk when he chose, using an amazing vocabulary with a humor that delighted Neil. Though obedient and willing, a strange air of aloofness clung to Paul, a sense of separateness, of loss, evanescent, trivial; yet at

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times marking him as if he were an orphan in his own home. Neil laughed at the lad's odd ways and called him a queer little tyke; but Mary pondered them over within her heart.

Maternity, in thus developing Mary, acquainted her with sorrow far different from the passionate grief and ignorant fears of earlier days. The blooming of the true womanly nature within her made her less selfish, and more remorseful. She dreaded not for herself, but for her son — that innocent, unknowing flesh of her flesh, blameless, yet involved, through her fault, in an intricacy of possibilities, vague, yet all alike evil. A morbid anxiety to do one's duty in a single respect is apt to widen in time and take in subjects hitherto treated with indifference. Mary began to be troubled over her treatment of Neil. Ought she not to confess to him that Paul was not his son, and would he not, good-hearted and loyal that he was, understand that she had fled headlong and heedless to the one refuge open to her, as free from deliberate intention as a deer in its wild flight from the hunters?

Then, in her doubt and uncertainty, there came a happening that drove her back into silence. She had acquired, among other accomplishments, that of water-color painting, and joined a little sketching class of ladies and gentlemen. One of the members of this class was so foolish as to mistake her eager

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interest in his work for an interest in himself. Being at the callow age when married women seem especially attractive, because frank and kind, he thought himself in love, and began paying attentions that meant nothing to her and much to him. This caused some good-natured joking among the other women, echoes of which came to Neil's ears.

Neil went straight to his wife and asked her what it meant. She, for the first time, saw him angry, and angry in a way that petrified her. He plainly told her that he was not the sort of man who would permit the slightest scandal to attach to her name.

"I'm a good husband to you, Mary," he said, "and I trust you as I'd trust a saint in heaven. But unless you tell me, now and here, that all this story is a damned lie, I'll go out and kill that little snipe, and you'll never see Neil Breen in this world or the next. For if you weren't true to me, and went to heaven, I'd choose hell!"

Though her first words seemed to have satisfied him, Neil was moody and sullen, and that night, for the first time since their marriage, he came home the worse for liquor. Such a manifestation of unsuspected traits was a supreme shock to Mary. Where then was the careless, good-natured, irresponsible wanderer, who had rushed into a happy-

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go-lucky marriage with such utter confidence? Her newly-formed habits of reflection warned her that, like herself, Neil had changed with the years.

Authority had developed Neil Breen, if the intensifying of the will, and the magnifying of the personal concept, can properly be termed development. His mental dignity was enlarged, but not strengthened, by the deference and obedience accorded him at the works. His anxiety no longer was to gloze over his faults with a ready appeal to human weaknesses; on the contrary, he had set up in his own estimation a graven image of himself before which his little world might well fall down and worship. There is madness in long continued power, unless it be qualified with a heavy sense of responsibility and duty. As the waitress had said years before, Neil was good-natured enough when not crossed; but, now, a crossing seemed almost sacrilege to his alert and sensitive vanity. Thus he was more dictatorial, quick-tempered and passionate, prone to think offence, and, when the slight was not easily adjusted to his self-esteem, sometimes brooding over it in the deadly conviviality of secret and solitary drink.

When Paul was ten years old, Edith, the second child, was born, to Neil's supreme delight. "You've got a real, roly-poly, Irish lass, this time, Mary, for a fact," he cried. "Why, she's the very image of

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me. Somehow, I feel more drawn to her, don't you know?"

"Yes," said Mary in a low tone, "I wish Paul was more like her."

"Variety's the spice of babies," continued Neil gaily, "and I hate to see a family all a-row like peas in a pod. Paul's a riddle — perhaps he'll prove a genius, and too much for the likes of us; but this little lass is just a human package, filled with all the comforts of home. Take them together, they're a pair that's hard to beat."

Mary did not share her husband's complacency over the contrast between the children. She marveled at his blindness, and, as the years made the dissimilarity of feature and character the more marked and distinct, she dreaded each day as the one on which the shameful truth must flash over him. Under the wearing suspense, her health began to fail rapidly; and then, as she grew weaker and weaker, to a purely physical fear was added the spiritual anguish of divine wrath, the more inexorable the nearer it seemed. What should she do, afraid of her husband, afraid of God? Almost inevitably, with the instinct of refuge, like the filings to the magnet, Mary turned to the one great source of consolation and hope for suffering womankind, throughout the ages — the church.

One day, the Rev. Samuel Sanderson received an

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unsigned note, in a tremulous, feminine hand, stating that one of his congregation was anxious to have him express his views on the subject of the confessional. The minister was a worthy and sincere man, fervid of purpose, but somewhat emotional and indiscreet. Long habit had made him profuse in generalities, and here was the very string upon which to hang some of the most precious of them. Without ado, he drew a pad of paper to him and began to write. As his pen moved, it quickened. He became interested, absorbed, carried away by his theme, and when at length he was summoned to his belated and lonely supper, he laid aside his work with the gratified words: "That is the best sermon I ever wrote."

Sunday, this conviction of power was confirmed. There was no lolling in the pews, no shiftings of feet upon the floor. The congregation was fixed by his first word, and he, in turn, was inspired by the rapt attention he secured. As his soul expanded within him, he abandoned his text, and spoke impromptu — the thoughts, images and tropes, which had come so slowly in his study, now tumbling inexhaustibly from his teeming intellect. He burned with love and sympathy for those who bore within them the awful burden of unconfessed guilt. He depicted the Great White Throne as the seat of mercy and love; and the clergy as emissaries bear-

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ing tidings of exceeding joy whereby scarlet should become snow-white.

To Mary, gazing up at the minister, forgetful of all else but those healing words, he seemed as one bringing water to a poor, parched traveler in a desert. Here at last was the physician that could minister to a mind diseased. He spoke with such assurance, with such rapturous certainty of a cure that could not fail.

"Confession pays the penalty," he reiterated; "confession makes the soul again sound and whole. Why then hesitate; why then delay? Your pastor is only God's representative; God knows already. By the lips of his representative on earth, your Father in heaven shall give you the blessed peace of forgiveness, the joy that is greater than mere oblivion could bring; for the reconcilement with God is sweeter than mere forgetfulness."

Little wonder that when the sermon ended with the open-armed entreaty "Come," Mary was ready, nay eager, to obey.

The Rev. Samuel Sanderson rested from his labors, in the pastor's study. He viewed his work through the glasses of satisfaction and found that it was good. A fitting ending, truly, climactic, even dramatic, to the years of continuous toil in the vineyard. Now, with a light heart, and a sense of the worthiness of hire, he could avail himself of the

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vacation recently granted, and journey to the distant town of Fremontia, in the northwest, where he was to meet his little daughter, Constance, and bring her back to the home from which she had been separated since her mother's death.

As the good man thus rubbed his hands over the pleasing prospects both behind and before him, there came a slight rap, followed by the instant opening and shutting of the door. Mrs. Neil Breen, the wife of the richest member of his congregation, and herself the most conspicuous and faithful of the Woman's Auxiliary band of the church, passed through like a shadow, and, falling prone at his feet, sobbed out the secret of her life, most intimate, most shameful.

The Rev. Mr. Sanderson listened in silence. He was frightened beyond expression of word or act. Like many clergymen, he was so used to dealing with abstractions that it had never occurred to him that these were but algebraic symbols that had no meaning except when translated into terms of flesh and blood, of soul and body, of virtue and vice. Now, in his fatuity, he had set in motion the secret mechanism controlling human lives, and who could foretell what hideous wreck and tragedy might not ensue.

More than this, being a good, true man, he was ashamed of the blatant, unreasoning enthusiasm,

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which had always been the thorn in the flesh of his conscience, and the snare to his feet on the path of righteousness. Again and again, had he rushed in where angels fear to tread, only to slink out in humiliation and contrition. Even while Mary was still speaking, finding a poor comfort perhaps in detail, he had breathed a vow to God that never again would he through lack of discernment cause one of these little ones to grieve; and when at length she ceased, lying abased before him, her arms extended in the form of a cross, he raised her tenderly, his soul absorbed with the one purpose of preventing further evil.

He told her that she had done her full duty to herself in thus confessing her sins, and that now her concern must be her duty to those with whom she was so intimately connected. He warned her that she was the guardian of Neil's rash and violent nature, and the arbiter of the future weal and woe of the children, Paul and Edith. "There is a selfishness in confession against which you must be especially on guard," he continued. "Where wrong can be righted, then it may be one's duty to speak openly, in defiance of consequences. But when only disgrace, suffering and crime can be the fruits of exposure, then the secret must be kept hidden, since others have acquired a right in its hiding. Take up again your burden, my poor sister, and bear it

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onward without repining; for such is the penalty of your wrong-doing, imposed not in anger but in loving-kindness. The road is hard, the way is steep, but the light of God's love shines upon it; and she who is doing the best for others, is doing the best for herself."

So Mary went back to her home, determined to accept her lot. She was dulled by the futility of human efforts; she was dazed by the power of human weaknesses. What was the use of struggling? With something of the forced abnegation of the condemned, she put from her alike her sorrows and her fears. As her health steadily grew more delicate and she became more and more feeble, she seldom left her home, limiting her interests to its material needs.

Neil soon noticed a reserve in her manner toward him, which he bitterly resented. With characteristic lack of discrimination, he found his home-circle almost repellent to him, exaggerating Paul's peculiarities, and belittling Edith's careless affection. His rugged health made him impatient of invalidism; and he spoke contemptuously of his wife's "fine airs and whimsies." Though his wealth had increased amazingly of late through speculation, and he was never happier than when he was lavish with it, he felt that his importance was unappreciated by his family; and he began more and more

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to welcome any excuse that took him from them. Consequently, he was glad when business called him to the distant city of Fremontia; though he was vaguely worried over his wife's health and momentarily troubled at the thought of leaving her for so long a period.

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CHAPTER IV

THE SEAL BROKEN

NEIL BREEN was low of spirit on arriving at Fremontia. The old light-heartedness, that once had enabled him to find in the drama of life around him a book of perennial interest, was gone. In its stead, black care had journeyed with him. Vaguely discontented with Mary and disturbed at her failing strength, vaguely displeased with Paul, even the thought of Edith failed to gratify him, since it recalled so many of his own traits, diminished, playful, yet vital in her, that he would, but could not, change. In a dumb sort of way he felt that the acquisition of wealth was after all but a part of a greater, more mysterious business, in which he who had bartered his contentment for it got far the worse of the bargain.

The old restlessness, however, that innate craving to be with rather than apart from men, though it had lain dormant, was still a moving force with Breen. The gloomy, cheerless office of the hotel was repugnant to him; his room, with its crude

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comforts and solemn, foreboding silences, could only be attractive to exhaustion; and so, having digested the contents of a directory and a time-table as a fitting dessert for a dinner not at all to his taste, he wandered aimlessly through the streets, as once he had wandered aimlessly over the world, though then he had been alone and gay, and now Black Care stuck close to his side.

The night was starless and rainy, with a bitter tang to the air. The houses, set back from the street, seemed wrapped in repellent seclusion. But few persons were abroad, and they all hurried in the same direction. Breen followed listlessly until he came to a broad, low edifice, flattened out by the weight of a square bell-tower. Light streamed through its windows with promise of warmth and welcome; while over the open doors were these inscriptions: "Come, for all things are now ready," and "Haste, ye sinner, will ye die?"

Neil Breen stopped and stared hesitatingly; then, as a young man stepped forward and took him persuasively by the arm, he entered and seated himself in one of the rear pews of the well-filled auditorium.

The scene was one of emotional excitement, which the presiding clergyman, by frequent, personal exclamation, did not fail to encourage. In various parts of the church men were wildly exhorting, indifferent to and unconscious of their

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mutual interference. Here, women were weeping and wringing their hands; there, mere children, either ghastly with terror, or intoxicated with hope, were sobbing or shouting. At the steps to the pulpit, kneeling penitents muttered their sins incoherently. Amens resounded, with invocations to God, crude, insistent.

An accumulating magnetism in the air kept drawing the people closer and closer together. Example bred example; contagion spread contagion. A universal impulse swelled and predominated, and its purpose was confession and repentance. The rush of its tide was marked by the progressive loss of self-control. At times, the whole congregation was on its feet, with waving arms and swaying bodies, as if under a possession. At times, the united outcry was a roar, discordant, inhuman. Then, just as spontaneously, the volume harmonized and melted into some old hymn, attuned to tender memories and vibrant with tears. In such an obsession, timidity and reserve ceased to exert any influence. Extravagant imitation ruled the assemblage as it has ruled many another mob.

But Neil Breen remained stolid and skeptical in a rear pew. Indeed, disgust began to succeed wonder, as he heard a young girl in the aisle scream out shameful self-accusations, and watched a woman at the rail tear her gray hair in an agony of abasement.

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There was no relaxation or entertainment in all this overwrought, unnatural relinquishment of the sanely pleasant qualities which had bound him to people, while at the same time attracting them to him. It made him vaguely discontented and displeased with the world, as he was with Mary and Paul; and he would have no more of it.

As Neil rose, about to seek the outer darkness in preference to such inner light, a tall, elderly man, in clerical dress, aglow with the ineffable air of always doing the right thing at the right time, sprang lightly up the pulpit steps, the presiding clergyman yielding readily to him, and stretched out his hand. "Peace, be still," he commanded, and the spiritual tempest began to abate. Neil saw that it was the Rev. Samuel Sanderson, his wife's pastor, his own personal friend, who, had he been asked, he would have said was a thousand miles away. With mouth agape, he settled back in the pew, for once in accord with the congregation in its surprise and expectation.

His seemly appearance, his confident bearing, gave Mr. Sanderson authority. As he kept his long hand extended, his gaze steady and forceful, his wide mouth spread into a smile, bland, reassuring, certain, the neophytes crept away from the rail, the exhorters lowered both voice and arm, the matrons and maids, gulping hysterically, smoothed their

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gowns and set their faces into decorum. The little children lost their precocity, and nestled sleepily up to their mothers. A Sabbatical calm prevailed.

"Dear friends," began the preacher, "As I, a stranger in a far land, came, to-night, through divine guidance into this your Patmos, I felt that indeed it was good to be here. It is by means of such blessed seasons as this that the seed of the Gospel fructifies, even as the tares of the world are plucked out and cast into the oven to be burned. Verily, your church is a city set on a hill, and its light shall not be hid."

A hum of approval rose from the congregation, and many a stern face relaxed into complacency. Even in the higher life, molasses has its place as a staple commodity.

"But," continued Mr. Sanderson, employing skilfully the oratorical device of contrast, "man at best is fallible in his nature, as the sparks fly upward. In your professions and confessions, to which it has been my privilege to listen, I detect one grave danger, which an inner voice constrains me to call to your prayerful attention. Therefore, I say unto you, be not righteous overmuch. In the superabundant joy of conversion, we are prone to fall into the sin of selfishness. To confess is such a relief, such a cleansing and washing away of the foul smudge of evil, that we seem to forget the

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intimate interrelations of this mundane existence, and thus may become unmindful of that duty toward one's neighbors which is the second great commandment."

A stir of unease vibrated through the congregation; for none are so sensitive to imputation of fault as those who have just denounced themselves as miserable sinners. The frowzy girl, who had distinguished herself in the aisle, tossed her head defiantly.

"The worldly have a saying," Mr. Sanderson went on, "taken from the wisdom of ancient Rome, and now established through inherent verity as a legal maxim, or self-evident truth, and from this saying we may derive a lesson of advantage, repudiate and despise, though we do, its source and adaptation. It is to this effect: — 'A man should so use his own as not to injure another.' Of course, in a wider, more spiritual sense, this may be construed to mean that, in seeking our own salvation, we must do nothing to our neighbor's despite; and here the philosophy of the heathen harmonizes with the sublime teachings of our Master.

"Open confession, then, is good for the soul; yet I say unto you watch, lest it injuriously affect those innocent and unoffending little ones who are in your especial charge.

"Let the newly-born Christian, born again, in

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that mystical, blessed sense, cast his burdens on the Lord. The Lord will surely sustain him. But, when reparation for wrong-doing is impossible, when shame and crime may result from the joys of self-revelation, then let him hold his peace and abide in silence. Self-revelation may be good; but self-abnegation is often better.

"Such, dear friends, feebly expressed, imperfectly stated, are the reflections that have come to me with the force of a warning. They should render us humble and vigilant, ever appreciative that mortals, even while seeking immortality, are inclined to err. My good father, long since gone to his everlasting reward, used to say that there was nothing like a story to drive home and clinch a point; and now there occurs to me an incident, an experience taken from my own pastorate, so illustrative of just what I have been trying to state for our mutual edification, that I am constrained to relate it to you."

A sigh of relief rose from the congregation, and there was a general settling back for the enjoyment of a concrete instance — that morsel of human yeast that can leaven a batch of abstractions. That the preacher, in the fulness of his heart, was about to violate those principles which he had so ably laid down seemed for the moment inconsistent with his holy office to no one, and least of all to himself.

On the contrary, Mr. Sanderson grew more bland

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and expansive as he told this experience. He felt that his audience must see him as he now appeared to himself, the central figure, strong and sufficient, in a moving picture replete with human emotions. Forgotten were the mortifying strictures, the prudent resolutions, of only a few hours before. He mouthed his words roundly, as if to prolong their savor, self-hypnotized through his own irrepressible, exhaustless enthusiasm.

"It was during an awakening of unusual power, vouchsafed to my flock," he said, "that a woman, still young and comely, though sorely stricken in health, came to my study in the deepest distress. Under Providence, some word of mine had pierced through the armor of worldly indifference and the deceitfulness of riches, and touched her conscience, her heart. A sense of guilt oppressed her. The past was black, the future without a ray of hope. What oh, what, should she do to be saved?

"In abasement and tears, she told me her story, and oh, my hearers, what a lesson there is in it, for you, for me, for us all, not to think to hide our secret sins from the all-seeing eye. Though apparently the happy wife of an opulent and worthy man, the honored mother of two lovely and interesting children, her life was a living lie. When a young girl, romantic and silly, and under circumstances, I admit, to a slight degree extenuating, she had

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formed a meretricious and shameful union with one of the youths of her native village, who had soon basely cast her aside. Concealing these dreadful facts, she had then hurriedly married her present husband, though suspecting — aye, knowing — that she bore in her bosom the fruits of her sin. This child, born in wedlock, was of course accepted and welcomed by the husband with all the sacred joys of fatherhood; and for years this duplicity had continued, this imposition had been maintained as if a righteous God no longer reigned in the heavens.

"But the icy touch of disease, the fear of approaching death, broke the spell of deception, and showed this woman where she stood — on the verge, on the brink — with the things of earth fading from her sight, with eternity yawning endlessly before her. Terror-stricken, she confessed herself to me as to God's representative; nor could she feel that true penance had been made until she also confessed herself, as fully, as absolutely, before men.

"I took that poor, suffering sinner by the hand; I raised her up from the mire of disgrace and despair. 'God does not require such a sacrifice of you, my sister,' I said. 'He delights rather in a contrite heart. The old dispensation of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, has passed away. In perfect forgiveness there can be no condition save that of ceasing from evil and doing good. Undoubtedly,

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justice must be done; the right way will manifest itself through prayer, never fear. But that way cannot be right, which, without effecting any equitable readjustment, would drive a well-meaning but violent man to bloodshed, bring public shame on a sensitive lad, and fatal knowledge to an imaginative girl. Remember Paul's highly strung nature,' I warned; 'remember little Edith's wayward — '"

In the full, headlong rush of his verbosity, the Rev. Mr. Sanderson stopped short. A man had emerged from the obscurity under the gallery into the full glare of the central aisle. For an instant he stood, his face livid and contorted, his strong hands clutching the air, his shoulders pressed forward, his back bowed, as if weighted with some horrible purpose. Then he rushed out into the darkness and the storm. It was Neil Breen.

Mr. Sanderson, too, for a like instant, stood stiff and staring, as if transfixed by the same bolt. Then he raised his hands in proclamation of abject woe. "Oh, the foolishness of preaching," he wailed. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Pray, brethren, pray, that God may have mercy on me, the chief of sinners; pray, pray without ceasing that this cup may pass!"

Hatless, his long, thin coat flying behind him like useless habiliments of woe, the minister rushed down the aisle and out into the darkness and the

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storm — the congregation gazing after him in mute amaze, as on one whom much learning had indeed made mad.

Out into the darkness and the storm the minister rushed, to wander blindly, indiscriminately, guided only by the instincts of remorse and dread. The bitter, beating rain had cleared the streets and blotted out the friendly glimmers of home. Borne like a leaf on the tempest, he drove along, seeking the man whom his own folly had infuriated, hoping to find him before greater wrong could be done.

The cold, the shiverings, the frequent collisions with post and branch, the surge of his blood, responsive to the beat of the wind, the thumpings of his heart, deadening the dash of the rain, the physical pain, so empty in comparison with enthralling mental agony, all, all, were unreal to him. As if in a dream he found himself inquiring at the police and railway stations, in hotels and saloons, accosting the weary compositors coming forth from the newspaper offices, and the hack-drivers and trolley-men huddled about the sodden coffee-stand, learning nothing anywhere, but everywhere rousing a strange apprehension which expressed itself in kindly, if rough, warnings.

It was long after midnight when the Rev. Mr. Sanderson asked at the desk of his hotel for the key to the apartments he had engaged with such

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simple, joyous anticipations in the endless aeons of twenty-four hours ago. The clerk looked up, genuinely shocked to see his guest in such a pass.

"Bad night, Doc," he said, "to be out without umbrel or greatcut in them black flimsies of yours. Better take a stiff go of quineen and juice before retirin'. Nobody will be the wiser except yours truly, and he'll never tell."

"My daughter, my little daughter," muttered the minister thickly. "You remember I told you she will join me here in the morning, brought hither by the kind friends with whom she has been visiting for over a year? Will you see that she is taken properly to the room I have secured for her, next to mine; for I may slumber late — I am weary, oh, so weary." As if still groping in the dark for what he could not find, he swayed heavily up the stairs.

The night-porter, with a keen glance after him, turned to the clerk, tapping his forehead significantly.

"Yes," agreed that functionary, "our good brother is a little off the key in his upper register."

Somehow, despite the thickening clouds about him, the voices calling, he knew not whither, that so distracted his purpose, Mr. Sanderson entered his room, lighted the gas, and, taking a fountain-pen and paper from his satchel, seated himself at the table and began to write, slowly, painfully, now and

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again looking around as if uncertain of his own identity or of what he had in mind to do.

Though the physical pain was gone, and his dripping garments no longer chilled his blood, increasing weakness oppressed him. His head sunk down on his hands; his trembling fingers shirked their task. To steady himself the better, he took an old book from the shelf — a treasure discovered and purchased the previous day during a delightful search through the shops — and, settling back in a great arm-chair, used the open pages as a desk. Ah, that was better; the support would surely enable him to finish. And then, then, he might rest until the bright sun returned bringing with it the brighter face of his dear daughter Constance.

Slowly, painfully, the lines were penned, vastly different in expression and writing from those clear and neat discourses in which he had taken such honest pride during the long years of his labors in the vineyard. At length the trembling fingers ceased to move, the head plunged forward, and then leaned back, the pen rolled away to an unheeded corner, the book fell shut on the floor, the white lips murmured "— Of whom I am the chief;" and all was still. The thickening clouds had dissipated, the mystic voices were hushed; so, too, the faults of a good man had disappeared forever, and only his virtues endured.

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The storm vanished with the night. The bright sun advanced in all the exultation of vital power, and brighter, more expectant still, was the face of Constance Sanderson as her friends brought her to the hotel.

"Hain't been a peep out o' him, Miss," said the porter, as he led the way upstairs; "but you kin rap on the side-door of your room, and he'll be a hearin' of you fast enough. Lord, but he was full of the talk of your comin', last night!"

"And well he might, too," continued the porter confidentially to the clerk, on his return to the office. "There's nothin' leery about that slip of a girl at all ewents. She's all there, with bot' feet, and the right stuff, too, smilin' cheery and givin' the good word, as if to an old friend. It's pretty she is, though more like a sinsible human than a doll; with her great brown eyes lookin' so brave and true at yer, and her thick brown hair a hangin' down her back, as if she was a good mother to herself. No wonder the gospel-sharp was hot in the neck over seein' her; I'd hev' been so meself, belike."

Constance rapped, and then rapped again; joyously, mischievously, delighted to have caught her father napping. But, when only silence responded — that intelligent, brooding silence, that knows so much and would withhold its knowledge through

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pity, her rappings grew feverishly insistent. She twisted and turned the knob; she shook the door, and it gave way before the impetus of her fears. She darted into the shadowy room.

The next moment, the very ghost of her former blitheness, she shot down the stairs to where her friends were awaiting a pleasant greeting on the porch. "He is dead, father is dead," she moaned; "and I am left alone and comfortless."

But, after the first shock had dissipated itself in merciful grief, the stout young heart of the girl, already trained by responsibilities, reasserted its sway. The look on the dead man's face also consoled her. He had been so weary; he had found rest. Why should she mourn when a peace that passed all understanding, but not all belief, so manifestly abided with him?

Truly, it was pitiful that he should have died alone, yet sweet and assuaging to know that death had come, not as a thief in the night, but rather as the friend who creeps up behind and closes the book when one has read over-late and is in need of sleep.

He had always found comfort in reading, and reading had comforted his last moments. The customary image of him formed in Constance's mind by a succession of childish impressions showed him in his great arm-chair gravely studying the open

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page. Only when life's task had finished, did the book fall from his grasp.

So the child tranquillized her heart; so she determined to face her little unknown as calmly as her father had faced his great unknown. The thought of what he would have her do was always with her; and, as she started on a new and eventful stage of her journey, tucked away with her most precious possessions was the book that he had been reading, folded in the softest tissue-paper and tied with black ribbon, reserved and set apart as a holy relic.

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CHAPTER V

NEIL BREEN'S WILL

MARY BREEN was preparing for rest. The children were abed and asleep. In her own room, the night-lamp was burning dimly by the bed, with snowy coverings turned back. There was peace, there was refinement in the very air — a neatness, a simplicity, almost virginal. Something of this same modest grace attended Mary in her final preparations. Her hair hung about her like an aureole; her robe clung to her like a vestment. In her melancholy pose, the exalted lift of her head, as she now and again paused, absorbed by a reverie that recurred against her will, there was the abnegation and surrender of a martyr, awaiting a doom already pronounced.

In the last few days, Mary's spirit had thus been frequently oppressed. She had not heard from Neil since his departure, though usually his pen was as garrulous as his tongue. The time set for his return had already elapsed, though it would have been like him to surprise her by anticipating it.

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During his absence she had been very ill, and she realized that the end was not far off. Stains of blood had appeared on her handkerchief, recalling how terrified she had been as a child when her mother had lain back, pale and gasping, with that same dry cough racking her breast, and those same fatal signs thickening on her lips.

That gentle mother, taken from her so long ago, when she had most needed her ministrations, and almost forgotten in that struggle for protection and safety that had been her life, once more seemed close to her. She heard her feeble step, and the sweep of her clothing; she even felt her hand on her brow, soothing her, preparing her, for what? "Ah, well," sighed Mary, as she composed herself for the night, "only a little while, perhaps but a few hours, and all these things will fade away."

A man was plodding heavily over the road leading to Gloriosa. The waning light of evening, while it obscured, yet to a degree accentuated with its shadows the squalor, the vice, the evil and violent passions accompanying him as a retinue. A soft hat was pulled low over his roughly bearded face. His clothing was dirty and disordered. The smell of tobacco and alcohol permeated the air about him. He muttered to himself broken expressions of disgust and hatred.

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This was no belated wayfarer; this, no light-hearted tramp. Either he was one habituated to crime, pressing consistently over an often-trod way, or, likelier still, he was one who, having degenerated and retrograded, was now resolutely abandoning the good of later years for the bad of youth, and finding this latter state even worse than the first.

A little lad, sent from home on an errand to a neighboring house, darted across his path, only to be grasped and halted by a great, resistless hand.

"What's your name?" growled the man.

"Pau— Paul, if you please, sir," faltered the child.

"Then take that for a misbegotten brat!" And the man, as if maddened by the chance associations of the name, spurned him with a heavy buffet.

The little lad ran home to soothe his heart and hurt in his mother's lap. The night descended, close and black, blotting out the twilight and hiding the stars. So, too, without a ray of kindliness to mitigate the dull rage possessing him, did Neil Breen keep plodding his dogged way to Gloriosa.

It was late when Neil Breen reached the house, and, at another time, he would have been startled to see it lit so brightly; but, to-night, this unusual sight, if noticed at all, made no impression on him as he stumbled up the steps. Before he reached the

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door, it was opened by a weeping maid, who started back in fright as she saw the wild-eyed man before her. In a moment she recognized the master and, hiding her fear at his appearance, whispered to him between sobs:

"Thank God you have come, sir. The mistress is dying; the doctor says there is no hope for her — she has asked for you, sir."

For a full minute Neil Breen stood motionless and stared at the girl. Gradually the look of brutal passion, of drunken fury, faded from his face and was succeeded by an expression of sorrow and anguish. Forgotten was that fell purpose cherished throughout the long journey — he only remembered the wife who, whatever her early sin, had loved him and had been true to him; the wife whom he had loved, and still loved.

He staggered up the stairs, entered the room and approached the bed where his wife was lying, pale and motionless.

As if she knew who was beside her she opened her eyes and gazed weakly at him. She noted his disordered clothes, his unshaven face, his blood-shot eyes, and instantly the truth came to the dying woman.

"I know what you have found out, Neil," she whispered; "you need not tell me. I know how you are suffering; but do you think I have not

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suffered for years as you are suffering now, poor dear?"

With a groan her husband flung himself down beside the bed, and buried his face in the clothes, while great sobs shook his frame. Mary reached out a weak hand and placed it on his bowed head.

"I do not ask your forgiveness, dear, — for all these years I have loved you, and I know you will forgive me. Besides, dear, I am dying, — but there are worse things than dying, Neil; the harder part remains for you. You are going to make straight the crooked places. You are going to be the good, brave man you've always been to me — always, I say — taking care of the motherless children, Edith and Paul — "

"Paul!"

"Would you harm the innocent? Ah, Neil, I can see now, when it's too late, how I've failed in my duty to that poor boy. It was my love for you that made me prefer our own, our really own child, and, now, in remembrance of that love you must make it up to him. Never, never — promise me — shall he know his mother's sin, his own blight and disgrace. You do promise me, don't you, Neil?"

"I do," answered Neil, thickly. "But the man, the man?"

"The man, Neil, passed out of my life, the little

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life that now only holds those whom I love and would guard even from themselves, and, pray God, he shall never come within it again. You will never know his name."

"And his brat must be the same as my son?"

"There is the sting; I know it, but I ask it of your love for me, — for the wife who loved you — and is dying. Shield him from humiliation, bring him up properly, teach him to honor his mother's name, prepare him for life. It's not the money, oh, no; settle that part as you will; there's many a young man ruined by too much of it. Did it ever buy me happiness, Neil? And now, put your arms closer around me, and try to pray for us both. My heart, my breath, are going out of me — dear God, grant peace — forgiveness — rest."

The golden radiance streamed through the half-drawn curtain, sending a chill to the heart of the man, but caressing and blessing the dying woman. It brought to her the message for which she had cried, and again she strove to stretch out her poor arms in welcome. What did she see in those mystic rays reflected from the limitless bounds of the unknown? What did she hear in the magic harmonies of their silent flight through space? When a low-lying cloud presently shut them off from earth, Mary Breen was gone with them; but she left a smile behind her.

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Neil Breen met his bereavement, as he had met other serious and sad matters of life, in an impulsive, irrational, and extravagant way. The funeral was the talk of the town; and, when his plans for a "mortuary chapel" became known, local pride spread his name and fame far and wide. Much was written about his personality and history, the immense fortune he had accumulated, the poignancy of his grief, and the priceless works of art that would fittingly enshrine his wife's remains and immortalize her memory.

It happened, one day, that some such account caught the notice of a stranger in town from the East, an elderly man, prosperous and dignified, yet with a responsive twinkle in his eye. "Can that be my bold Neil?" he mused. "Sure, 'tis as near to him as two peas. There's nothing like the luck of a lousy calf, as they used to say. I'll go and see at all events."

An hour later, the two brothers, after a separation of half a lifetime, were seated together in the library at Neil's home.

Philip Breen gave a very good report of himself. He was a merchant of recognized wealth and standing in Hamlin. He had a fine house on the banks of the river, a few miles from town, where he lived with his wife and their son Adolph. He had had his ups and downs, but had come out from them all

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the more prosperous. Life was a game to be sure; but, if a man kept his nerves and wits, he was certain to win. "You don't look much like a winner yourself, Neil," he added, "for all the big talk. What's wearing on you, man?"

"I'm fagged out," replied Neil, wearily, "and feel that I should get about setting my house in order for the last time."

"Nonsense, you're too young a man, from too vigorous a stock, to think of dying."

"It isn't thinking so much of dying as so little of living."

"But do you mean to imply," asked Philip, his business instincts rising, "that you haven't already taken the ordinary precaution of making a will?"

"It's got to be thought out first," replied Neil stolidly, "before it is written."

"There shouldn't be any difficulty about that," Philip went on briskly, "you having only the two children, and your affairs in the first-class shape you've been telling me. Of course, I don't know what you are mulling over in your mind, and I don't want to know, since it's no business of mine. It's half indigestion, I'll warrant, anyway. But don't you put yourself in the hands of any cheap, local pettifogger. The only kind of advice worth buying is that which commands the highest price in the judgment of the commercial world. Now, I'll

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tell you what I will do. My lawyer is coming west presently on this same little matter of mine, and I'll have him stop off and have a talk with you. Take him all in all, he's about the best the market affords. His name is John Strain."

"John Strain?" repeated Neil, curiously. "It seems to me that I have heard or read something of him, though I don't know what or where. Tell me about him."

"He's after our sort, Neil; sprung from the soil, and making his way with his hands and his brains. True, he married well; but it took a man of resolution to do that — ha, ha — when you think of the wife he chose. But you can't buy learning, industry, faithfulness, grit; the dread of other lawyers, the respect of the judges; and these are the things he's been piling up gradually year after year. He's a fighter, is John Strain; with the strength and grip of a bulldog. Once he tackles a case, he never lets go. Honest and fearless — Lord, how he has had the ring of corruptionists, who have been looting our city for years, on their ham-bones before him. 'What's the least you'll do to us?' they implored. 'The full extent,' he answered, and they got it, too. It may take time — everything that John Strain does must take time, he's so thorough, so complete — but in the end I believe he'll change the political complexion of our county — Oleida County,

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you know — and then he can have any place he wants in the gift of the people. What a district attorney he would make; what a district attorney he would make!

"But all that is neither here nor there," continued Philip; "the point I want to make is that here is a bang-up lawyer, at your disposal in your house-cleaning, without costing you a cent either. It will all come out of the general retainer I give him — now what do you say?"

"No," answered Neil, doggedly; "there are some things that must be thought out alone, no matter how good the man may be that is offering advice. I'll go to no local pettifogger, never fear. When I know just what I want to do, then I'll set about it in my own way. It may be a clumsy one, belike, but it gets there all right, I notice, for all that. So, drop it, Philip. Perhaps, after all, you may have the chance some day of fixing over my affairs with your friend Strain, but not now, not now."

The brothers parted with that indifferent affection to which absence has no significance, and they never met again. Neil gathered together the fragments of what remained after the one great cataclysm of his life, and tried to make the best of them. The children were brought up in comfort, and furnished proper instruction, but he saw little of them. Each in a way was painful to him; Paul

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through what he was not, and Edith through what she was. He, therefore, kept much by himself, and the habit grew with the years until he became a moody recluse, existing mechanically. Thinking little of dying, but less of living, his health gradually gave way; for cherished purpose of some sort is the surest guard against mortality.

And so, at length, he died; and Philip Breen did have the chance of fixing up his brother's affairs with his friend Strain. After the funeral, he found the will in an envelope addressed to him. It was a holograph, clumsy and crude, embodying Neil's prejudices, affected, so far as they could be affected, by the promises he had made to Mary on her death-bed.

The will started with a long, rambling dissertation on the disadvantages and dangers of wealth to a young man. It then branched off into a laborious argument showing that property of every sort should descend preferably in the female line. Coming down to particulars, it discussed the characteristics of the two children, maintaining that Edith's wild, undisciplined nature should be fortified and protected by all the safeguards that money can command, including "the pick of the world for a husband;" and that Paul's abilities might bring fame to himself, and benefit to mankind, if only developed under the incentives of need and hope.

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Having laid down these premises, the will provided as follows:

The sum of fifty thousand dollars was bequeathed to Paul on reaching the age of forty, on the condition that he had, at that time, an established fame as a benefactor of the human race.

Subject to this contingent bequest, the entire estate was left absolutely to Edith, on marrying or reaching her majority.

In case of Edith's death, while unmarried and a minor, and in that case only, Paul inherited the property.

Evidently Mary's dying words had been potential with her husband. She, herself, in her anxiety to save Paul from repudiation and disgrace, had laid the foundation for this discrimination by saying that it was not the money she was worrying about, and that it had proved the ruin of many a young man. When to this suggested compromise were added Neil's own private thoughts regarding the children, the result arrived at was not surprising.

Clumsy and crude as this disposition was, it showed that tendency to arrive which its maker had predicted. What was there to be said against it? It was simple, direct, certain, made by the testator with his own hand, when undoubtedly of sound mind and memory. True, it discriminated against Paul; but the motives for such discrimination were

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founded in solicitude and love, and appealed to the best judgment of many men. Philip Breen, who was named as executor and guardian of the children, sputtered somewhat over what he was going to do to rectify Neil's dyspeptic mullings; but, in the end, entered into his trust. Under the skilful management of John Strain, probate was had, active business was settled, scattered assets collected, and the great fortune finally invested in the proper securities, to be held in trust until either Edith should take it, subject to the conditional bequest, on marrying or coming of age, or Paul should take it through Edith's death, during minority and while single.

Paul and Edith went to live with Philip Breen at his river-side home near Hamlin. To the strange incompatibility which had always separated them, over which Mary had grieved and Neil had deliberated, the fact now was added, ominous at least to the curious, the interested and the suspicious, that the great prosperity of the one was inevitably conditioned on the grave misfortune of the other. And not yet, as Mary had fondly hoped, was the tragedy ended in peace.

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CHAPTER VI

THE THREE CHILDREN

PHILIP BREEN was enough like his brother to believe that variety in the nature of children is desirable, and he had no reason to complain of any uniformity among the three that fate had gathered in his big house on the Hamlin River.

"It's well I have plenty of room for them," he remarked to his wife, "or they'd be like cats in a bag. There's Edith, now, who wants to know everybody's affairs, and yet can't keep still long enough to make sure of anything for fear she'll miss something else. Edith? Neil, poor fellow, should have named her Will-o'-the-Wisp. As for Paul, he'd do well for a milestone or a surveyors' bench-mark. Give him some of his scientific contraptions, and you're sure to find him where you left him, providing that plague of the world, Edith, hasn't driven him into his burrow. You mark my words, Paul will amount to something in the world, either bad or good. What he says — which is little enough, I'll allow — is always worth hearing. He's

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bound to help or hinder, I don't say which. Didn't he ask you to let him have the use of that room in the north attic?"

"I believe he did," answered Mrs. Breen, slowly. She never wasted energy in either useless words or aimless actions. This quietness was what had attracted her husband. He had enterprise where his brother Neil had had restlessness; but he had shown wisdom in choosing his opposite for his wife. While he was discussing the characters of the young people, she was reading the morning paper, for they were at breakfast.

"What did he want it for?" Philip inquired.

"A work-room," she replied, after she had finished a paragraph.

"Let him have it, then. He resembles his father in one respect, at least, he likes to mull. Have a good lock put on the door, and he can have one refuge for himself and his traps."

"Adolph wanted it, too," said Mrs. Breen.

"No matter," Philip insisted, "give it to Paul. Adolph will get all that's coming to him and a little more, maybe. I'm not so sure that he didn't want it only because he knew that Paul was after it. Those two don't get along together any too well, and, though Adolph is my own son, I'm bound to look after Paul as if he were my own. Owing to that cranky will of Neil's he's got to make a way

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for himself in the world, so he ought to have free swing. Luckily there is income enough to give him the best education and something over. By the way, can it be that he has some idea in his mind about winning that fifty thousand dollars? Forty years of age to most lads seems just this side of death. But you're not listening, Gertrude?"

"I've heard all you said," she replied, rising. "Paul shall have the room. I'll have it cleared out for him. It will be a good thing to confine all his messes to one place. But now I must attend to my housekeeping."

Different as Paul and Edith were in most respects, they were alike in their impressions of their cousin Adolph. Though he was good-looking, of pleasant address, intelligent, and never out of temper, he made them both uneasy in his presence and doubtful of his sincerity. Edith was always attempting to irritate Adolph into some misbehavior, but never succeeded. He never resented her open hostility, nor replied to her fierce tirades; but she soon learned that he could not be attacked with impunity. His retaliations were always effective, but never confessed. If she flung one of his books into the river, she soon after missed a favorite doll. She would then run to her aunt and lodge information against Adolph, only to find herself helpless for lack of proof. He would deny all knowledge

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of the loss, and this with a calm, though sorrowful indifference that imposed upon every one. Once, carried away by her rage, she struck him; whereupon he tripped her up and threw her heavily to the ground, and then walked slowly away with unruffled dignity.

Paul also found his cousin not at all desirable as a companion. The two never quarrelled, but there was a latent animosity between them. Adolph was a hard student, and easily excelled Paul in all studies except mathematics, for which the latter had unusual aptitude and a strong taste. But Adolph's supremacy gave him no pleasure since Paul was absolutely unmoved by it. He used to taunt Paul with wasting his time, interjecting many an adroit and veiled reference to the fifty thousand dollars worth of fame that might be his; but Paul would listen as if thinking of something else. When they went to college there was the same relation between them. Paul became popular, but refused to be made prominent. Adolph achieved prominence by sheer ability, and could fix upon no cause for an unpopularity which he deeply regretted, and for which he secretly blamed Paul.

After graduation they both entered the professional schools in New Chester, from which, in due course, they returned home, Adolph with a degree of LL. B., *summa cum laude,* and Paul, with a

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hardly-won sheepskin, dubbing him M. D., to which he attached apparently not the slightest importance.

Philip Breen called the young men into the library, one evening, and (shutting out Edith, who protested in vain against her exclusion) bade them sit down, for he wished to talk over their future.

When they were settled, Philip Breen took his place in a particularly large and impressive, stuffed leather chair — his favorite throne when acting the part of an official paterfamilias — and began what sounded like a previously prepared address.

"You are now," he said, "upon the threshold of your practical life, and for the first time are called upon to make a distinctive and definite choice of a career."

Adolph, at this point, interrupted him. "Say, father," he asked drawlingly, "I don't like to cut you off, but haven't you made a slight mistake?"

Philip looked annoyed and then puzzled. "Mistake? How do you mean?" he inquired.

"You're about two years late with your speech, sir. It sounds something like the beginning of a baccalaureate sermon. Our toes would get cold on the threshold all this time."

"Adolph," said Paul, "let's hear what your father has to say. You know what he means well enough. We're both just out of school. What's the use of interrupting him?"

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"Oh, I don't mind," Adolph answered, lighting a cigarette, "only, after spending six years in getting ready to practise law, it does jar one a little to be advised about choosing a career."

"There's more than a degree in being a lawyer," said Mr. Breen, "and there's many an LL. B. to whom the practice of the law is a howling wilderness. As you get older and wiser, Adolph, you may have more respect for your father's opinion. But we are wasting time. So with your kind permission, my son — "

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," said Adolph, easily. "I'm all attention. There's nothing like being told what to do after you have done it."

"You both have now reached the point where you must choose your life-work, and — and I want to know your decision," resumed Philip Breen, evidently abandoning his oration in despair. "You, first, Adolph; since you are so cocksure."

"I should have no hesitation in saying that I mean to acquire a practice as soon as possible," Adolph answered. "It suits my tastes and purposes in life, so far as I feel justified in having such things — "

"So I have judged," interrupted his father, "and on that opinion I have already acted. I don't know a better man for you to begin with than John Strain. He was my attorney in the canal-contract

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case, and has had a general retainer from me ever since. I wrote him a week ago, asking whether he could make room for you in his office, and here is his answer." He tossed the letter on the table.

Adolph read it aloud.

JOHN STRAIN,
COUNSELOR AT LAW.

"MY DEAR MR. BREEN: —

"You ask me to grant as a favor what I shall deem it a privilege to accept. Your son's record at the law-school augurs well for his future. I shall be very glad to talk with him as to making the final arrangements for receiving him in my office. Ask him to call soon, at about two o'clock.

"Your very humble and obedient servant,

"JOHN STRAIN.

"MR. PHILIP BREEN."

Adolph's eyes sparkled. "I'd rather be in Strain's office than in any in the city," he exclaimed; "you did a good job there, father."

"Well, it takes you off the threshold, at all events. And now, Paul, I wish you were as easily started."

"I wish I were," agreed Paul, smiling affectionately at his uncle. "But I'm afraid you can't give me either of the things I most need."

"Let's hear what they are," answered Mr. Breen.

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"For though my brother, for reasons best known to himself, has practically cut you out of your inheritance, I, thank the Lord, have enough for you. I don't agree with his ideas, and I don't feel bound by them. Neil and I always had our differences, when we were most together, rest his soul; so, what else could be expected, after he had turned himself into a hermit? Let me know, then, what you mean to do, and we'll see whether I can't give you a helping hand."

"No doubt my father thought he was right," said Paul. "I was a quiet, thoughtful child, and he had an exaggerated idea of my natural ability. I am sure he was convinced that the course he pursued was the one to develop it. I don't care about the money —"

"We none of us do," murmured Adolph.

"But I do hope to do something for the sake of his pride in me," continued Paul, with heightened color.

"Then let me hear what you want," said Philip impatiently. "Come, speak out."

"I will," Paul answered, seriously enough. "I need two things — more time and more brains."

"Two trifles that have tripped up many another would-be benefactor of his kind," soliloquized Adolph.

Philip Breen looked disappointed. He had always

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resented Paul's silence about his chief interests. He believed that he had certain projects which he would declare at the right season, and he had hoped that his offer of assistance would be met with frankness. So now he sat in silence for a moment or two.

"You're a queer lad," at length he said; "there's little of the Breens in you, and that's not to be gainsaid. I can't do much for you, I'm afraid. So far as brains go, I think you have your share, my boy. And as for time, why, if you really have your father's bequest in mind, there's nearly seventeen years ahead of you. But, it may be you speak in parables. 'Time is money,' they say. So I'll do my best to solve your riddle, Paul. You may have a home here, and welcome, till you choose to go elsewhere. I can't pay you any more of the income from the estate; the accumulations are about exhausted. But perhaps this can help you out a bit." So saying, he drew his check-book from the drawer of the table, filled out a check for one thousand dollars, and handed it over. "There, buy glass retorts and chemicals with it, or what you like, till you need more, my boy," he continued. "Keep your own counsel, too, 'tis every man's privilege; but remember you've a place in your uncle's heart as well as in his home so long as you care to keep both."

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"I have a plan of my own," Paul said, moved by his uncle's generosity of word and deed, "but truly it is not the time to talk of it yet. You may be sure no one will know about it before yourself, Uncle Philip."

"Unless Edith gets a key to your den of mysteries," suggested Adolph. "She's a regular Bluebeard's wife about that room of yours."

"There is nothing there which concerns her in any way, or any one else, either," Paul replied, somewhat fiercely. "I've expressly forbidden her to come into it."

"We'll have a search-warrant out some day," Adolph went on, "unless we have first to issue a writ *de lunatico* to stop your practice of the Black Art. Come, Paul, why don't you chuck all that into the river, and get down to the practical hard-pan, the same as I have to do? You know it's all a pretence."

Paul made no reply, and, as just then Philip Breen rose, all three returned to the parlor. As they entered, Edith exclaimed:

"You needn't think you monopolize all the family councils. Aunt Gertrude and I have been holding one for ourselves, and I have a piece of news for you. One that will delight you both — Uncle Philip knows it already."

"Well," said Adolph, picking up a magazine

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and turning over the leaves, "break it to us gently."

"I'm going to boarding-school."

"Good idea. Only you won't stay."

"Where do you go?" Paul asked, "and when?"

"To the Cedars," said Edith; "and I start next week." And, while Adolph read and Paul's thoughts were plainly enough elsewhere, she rattled on, giving full particulars about the school, the grounds, the girls and everything else she knew on the subject, until bedtime silenced her.

Adolph Breen entered upon the busy and laborious work of a young attorney, and was soon, as he deserved, high in favor with the able lawyer, John Strain. He attracted his chief's attention not more by his diligence than by his ability, while methods of detail which might not have met with approval escaped notice in the engrossment of larger affairs. Every mature man of unusual powers needs a younger executive, and, in Adolph, John Strain had found a second self, quick to comprehend, fertile in resource, painstaking and unwearied in carrying out whatever was entrusted to him.

One day, when Adolph had succeeded by a brilliant manœuvre in collecting what was thought a hopeless judgment, Strain not only gave him due meed of praise, but invited him to a dinner given in his honor.

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Adolph thought the formal dinner rather a bore, but it proved to have an interest for him far exceeding that of any event of his life. He met, that evening, three surprises.

On his arrival, Mrs. Strain called him to one side. "Where was he?" she whispered, her white, pinched face twitching with nervous excitement. "Where was he last night; what made him so late?"

"It was nothing, my dear madam, I assure you," answered Adolph with a solicitous air, "nothing except an important conference with the Attorney General, which detained us both, until all hours, at the office."

Abigail Alice's lean face softened, and she put out her hand.

"You will always tell me?" she murmured. "That's right; I'm grateful, I am your friend. You will see what I have done for you before the evening is over."

Adolph, in his frequent meetings with Mrs. Strain, had always answered her jealous inquiries courteously and confidentially, but without any reflection save a passing sense of amused pity. Now, he was surprised by the fervor of jealous passion possessing her, and resolved that he would make of it an ally for his own advancement.

Then, this evening, for the first time, he met

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Constance Sanderson, Mrs. Strain's new companion, and began to realize the meaning of the phrase "falling in love." He learned subsequently that she was from the west, the daughter of a minister who had died suddenly, leaving her a mere pittance; that John Strain had been so much impressed with her, while she was acting as an instructor at a Seminary of which he was a trustee, that he had ventured to suggest her employment to his wife, when she had complained of the loneliness of her life; and that, most unexpectedly, this exacting lady had not only adopted the advice, but, thus far, had got along amicably with this new member of the family circle — a fact which to Adolph's judgment spoke volumes in favor of Constance's tact and forbearance.

Constance was daintily made, had rippling chestnut hair, beautiful dark eyes, and a bewitching little laugh. Adolph caught himself gazing intently at her whenever she was in sight, to the detriment of the easy self-possession which was his secret pride. He had never before been especially interested in a woman. But now, but now — well, this was the second surprise in his series. The third came from Mr. Strain.

After dinner, Mrs. Strain and Constance left the gentlemen to their coffee and cigars, and Strain flatly made Adolph an offer of a partnership. "We

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are lawyers," he said, "and needn't beat about the bush. You are the ablest assistant I have ever had in my office. I have confidence in your future, and the time to help you is now. Now, on my part, I have political ambitions. I need a keen, trustworthy, able young fellow who will devote himself absolutely to my interests, with the feeling that he is thereby advancing his own. Your father can aid me — he controls a large district. What do you say?"

"I say," answered Adolph, "that it suits me perfectly. Of course, what you want is the office of District Attorney and to-morrow I shall begin to hustle for you."

They shook hands. "I'll have the papers drawn at once," said Strain. "Now, shall we join the ladies?" And Adolph eagerly followed, lured by the unconscious magic of Constance's bright eyes.

While Adolph was thus becoming engrossed in love, politics and business, Edith, too, had her experiences. She went to her boarding-school, was happy there for a month, was restless the next month, and, after a number of escapades, was disciplined. The following week, she packed her clothing into a satchel, dropped out of a window by means of two knotted sheets, and appeared, next morning, at her uncle's house. She refused to return to

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school, and thereby forestalled the principal's refusal to receive her again among the lambs of her fold.

"I regret to say," this functionary wrote, "that Miss Breen's example has left a deleterious effect upon a number of the other girls. She is so impatient of all restraint that I must, in justice to myself and to those for whose welfare I am responsible, decline further charge of her. I must not forget to say, however, that she is not at all vicious, only she needs balance."

Edith was highly amused by this pedantic summary of her character, and treated the whole matter as an excellent joke. But Mr. Breen was pained by her levity. He insisted that she must qualify herself to receive the large property left by her father, and secured a strict governess to give her lessons at home.

Edith bore with the governess for a week, and then disappeared, leaving a note saying she was going back "toward the setting sun." Mr. Breen at once sent out an alarm, found her in Carteret, and, after an interview that really frightened the girl, brought her back home. There she remained, but with evident discontent. Her nature was essentially nomadic and untamed, and only fretted for the opportunity to follow its instincts.

As for Paul, during this period he showed little visible progress. He shut himself into his attic

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room regularly every day, and there remained except for the brief intervals of meal-times. He sat up late at night, and seemed to grow moody and irritable as the months went by. At last even Mrs. Breen became alarmed about him, and insisted that he must go about somewhat. Paul laughed, but offered no resistance and no suggestions.

Chance, however, did for him what he would not do for himself. One day, an errand sent him for the first time to the law-offices of Strain and Breen, and, while he was talking with his cousin, the senior partner came lurching through from the library, his arms filled with books. He caught sight of Paul's face, and stopped abruptly. "Who's your friend, Adolph?" he asked. And Adolph, with an outer grace that veiled an inner discomposure, presented Paul.

"You look like a fellow who ought to be cultivated," said the great lawyer. "Come up to the house and see me." And on he lurched with his books to his work.

Thus it came about that Paul Breen met Constance Sanderson. The two at once showed an attraction which irritated Mrs. Strain and troubled Adolph. Though neither was talkative, they seemed to have an abundance to say to each other whenever they were left undisturbed. Paul availed himself of every opportunity of coming to the house, though

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he received but scant welcome from its mistress. In fact, Abigail Alice at once took an aversion to him, vague, irrational, but instinctive. In her hot partizanship she drew many a contrast in Adolph's favor between the two young men for Constance's benefit. Constance listened, but usually made no reply except by that provoking laugh of hers.

"What can you see in that Paul Breen?" Mrs. Strain would demand.

"A purpose in life," Constance once replied.

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CHAPTER VII

THE WORK OF AN INVENTOR

ADOLPH's absorption in love, politics and business took him much from home, and he soon almost ceased to be an element in the daily life of the Breen mansion. Paul, though present in body, was hardly less absent in spirit. He appeared at meals, but was usually silent, and wrapped in his own thoughts. Mrs. Breen gave her whole soul to the housekeeping required by the large establishment over which she presided. Mr. Breen found his daily life in his contractor-work. So there was some justice in Edith's complaint that she might as well live in a pyramid, surrounded by Egyptian mummies.

Her aunt tried to interest her in the conducting of the house, but was forced to desist when the girl's impatient bungling had cost her two of her most faithful servants, who declared that "little Miss Edith would upset a saint, that she would; never knowing what she was after for two days together."

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At length, finding no interest in her home or its inhabitants, Edith, in despair, took to voracious novel-reading, in which she was as capricious as in all else she did. There was in the house a fairly good library of standard fiction, and she was too alert and intelligent to care much for trash. She began almost at random, but soon came to know her favorites by a process of rigid elimination. From the set of Dickens she chose "Pickwick Papers," found it mildly amusing until she reached the lugged-in stories, and then replaced it on the shelves. "A Tale of Two Cities" perplexed her with its abrupt changes of scene, and was never finished. She tried Thackeray's "Henry Esmond," only to find the dignity of the hero wearisome, and then, through an innocent sympathy with Becky Sharp, managed to read "Vanity Fair" throughout. George Eliot and Anthony Trollope were speedily condemned as "poky;" but Wilkie Collins proved a delight, and Charles Reade was devoured at all hours of the day and night.

"The Wandering Heir" gave Edith an idea. She still longed to see the world, but had found it impossible to elude pursuit when she fled from home. Why should she not dress as a boy, and thus at one stroke facilitate her travels and render detection difficult? She began to seek for books in which such enterprises had been successful, and

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soon came upon Stevenson's "Black Arrow" and "A Girl in the Karpathians," each of which made the plan both alluring and rational.

The more she brooded, the more fascinated she became with the project. The desire to escape from the dull household was nearly irresistible, and she did not mean to be brought back again. Adolph had made much fun of her former, futile flight; and Paul — wonder of wonders — had shown enough interest in it to rebuke her most solemnly, dwelling not more on her ingratitude and thoughtlessness than on the grave dangers to herself in going out into the world alone. The keynote of her character was curiosity. She longed to see sights and people, to fathom secrets and to provoke remark. Not naturally sly or secretive, she yet went about her preparations for flight with the utmost caution, though with a light-hearted contempt for consequences as innocent as it was pitiful.

Much to Mrs. Breen's surprise, Edith suddenly began to go to Sunday School, and kept up her attendance regularly, despite all Adolph's sarcastic comments and Paul's amused skepticism. When the novelty of this course had somewhat worn off, she joined a Dorcas society, and became active in providing clothing for the poor children of the neighborhood. By a little management she was appointed upon a committee to buy clothing, and

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then she would consult Paul, as the most taciturn instrument available, and even entrust commissions to him whenever it was necessary to get boys' garments. Once this custom was established, it was easy for her to add now and then an article of clothing to a list given him, and thus before long she gradually got together a complete outfit for herself. She found in the attic an old dress-suit case, and in this packed away, one by one, the things so obtained, each of which she tried on and fitted.

All this occupied her mind and made her seem so contented that gradually Mr. and Mrs. Breen relaxed their vigilance and concluded that she had outgrown her vagrant desires. But it led to a complication. Edith's visits to the attic became more and more frequent, and were of course rather stealthy in appearance. No one in the household noticed this except Paul. He was busy in his laboratory-room, and, intent though he was on his experiments, yet remained acutely sensitive to external impressions. Now and then he heard Edith moving about in her visits to the upper floor, and, aware of her curiosity, could think of but one motive for them. Once he went softly to the door, suddenly threw it open, and found her within a few feet of him. Her shoes were off, and she was greatly startled. He lost his temper instantly.

"Edith," he said angrily, "this is unbearable.

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You are no longer a mere child, and I will not submit to such treatment. Don't you dare to spy upon me. What I am doing doesn't concern you in the least. And you little know the danger you run by putting yourself in my way. I won't answer for your life — "

At this moment, Mrs. Breen's voice was heard at the foot of the stairs. She asked in a frightened tone: — " Paul, what are you saying? "

But he slammed the door and made no reply.

Edith hastily slipped on her shoes, which she had left at the head of the stairs, and ran down to meet her aunt.

" What is it, Edith? " Mrs. Breen asked. " I heard Paul threaten you."

" I don't know," said Edith. " I think he must be crazy. I went up to get a piece of silk I needed to trim a hat, and he broke out upon me in the most frightful rage. I think he must hate the very sight of me." Here she began to cry. " I wish I was away from all of you! There's no place for me here, and nobody wants me about. I believe Paul is bitter because father left me all that money. I wish he had been the daughter and I the son. The Lord wasted a good life when he gave it to Paul."

Mrs. Breen was shocked and sent Edith to her room, resolving to speak to Paul about his violence.

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But at her first word, Paul broke out in his own defence.

"I have had all I can stand from her," he declared. "I can't have her in my way. She interferes with my whole future. The rest of the family have some sympathy with my work and my life, but she is an obstacle, and she always has been. She is provided for, the Lord knows; why can't she let me alone? Let her keep her distance, if she knows what is good for her. I can't be responsible for anything that may happen if she insists on prowling about my attic room. I have given her warning enough. For her own good, let her be careful."

Mrs. Breen was amazed at this tirade. It was rare for Paul to lose control of himself, and his words left a deep impression on her mind. "Be calm," she entreated, "you don't mean what you say, I'm sure."

"Calm," Paul repeated, "how can I be calm, when a few days may determine all I care for in life? Do you think that I will let a little chit like that stand in my way? I do mean all I say, and more, far more."

Paul saw how seriously his words were taken, but he did not care. He was overstrained, and had lost much sleep. When first he had entered upon his present work, the thought of his father's will had

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inspired him; not with a greedy desire to win fame for the fortune dependent upon it; that, as his uncle Philip had said, seemed too remote to his years to be considered; but, rather, with a noble ambition to show to the world that his father's estimate of him had been true, and that the discrimination of his will was really the result of love and pride.

But, since he had met Constance Sanderson, this object, cherished still, was no longer the moving cause of his industry. He loved; and he believed he was beloved. But how could he plead his suit with empty hands? How dared he ask this young girl, who already had known the hardships of poverty, to accept a fate that might make those hardships permanent? No, no; he must first succeed; and success now meant not fame with a fortune in the far future, but fortune, first and at once, whether or no fame might be contingent upon it.

During his studies at the medical school, Paul had been deeply impressed with the writings of a young doctor, of whom he knew nothing except the name on the title-page of his text-books — James Tancredi. One paragraph in particular had taken root in his mind, and borne fruit. It was as follows:

"Life cannot exist without heat and moisture. Complete desiccation, the lack of heat-vibrations, spells death. All forms of morbific life require

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certain environments. To cure disease, then, we have but to change the environment beyond the life-limitations of the morbific agency. Matter is rate of vibration. Cannot the physician of the future attack diseases by vibratory modification? Heat, light, electricity — these are vibratory degrees, and in these the medicine of the future will find the ideal panacea."

Paul Breen, impressed by these words, resolved to begin a series of experiments designed to determine the life-limits of certain specific germs, and to test the effect of these three agencies upon certain germ-cultures. He had not chosen to make known his experiments. He felt convinced that he should meet only ridicule by a premature disclosure of his dreams. Medicine, to his uncle, meant a jogging about from door to door with pills, potions, steel instruments and a subsequent bill; to his aunt, the word "Doctor" stood for a kindly and patient gentleman, hired to hearken to symptoms all the rest of the world considered a bore; to Adolph and to Edith, he would be babbling an unknown tongue, with jests and gibes as a reward for his pains. So he had kept his counsel except to Constance Sanderson. To her, led by a few enthusiastic words about the glories and responsibilities of his profession, he had talked of his purpose in life; at first of the fame that might come to him were his labors

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successful, and latterly of the independence and freedom that such success would bring. But, even with her, he had kept carefully to generalities, fearful lest in being misunderstood he might weaken her faith in him.

And his many months of intelligent experiment were bearing fruit. Gradually he had installed in his attic laboratory many pieces of powerful and delicate apparatus. He used an electric current of high tension or of high amperage at will. He had many vacuum tubes of differing natures. He had physical contrivances for producing mechanical vibrations. He used many chemical substances both rare and costly, and he handled all these powerful agencies with a recklessness that amazed himself. His first prohibitions against the family had been dictated only by the wish for seclusion; but now he found another and more serious motive in his desire for their safety. There were accidents now and again. There were dangerous gases evolved, and even explosions — slight, it is true, but eloquent of possibilities against which he felt he must guard all except himself.

But, step by step, he had gained ground. Despite blind paths leading nowhere, and painfully retracted steps, he yet accomplished enough to encourage him to believe that he was on the road to some brilliant results in curative and preventive medicine. He

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resolved to proceed with the work at all hazards, feeling that the importance of the issues justified any sacrifice.

Long ago he had used the money his uncle had given him, and he had asked for and received a similar amount, the larger part of which he determined to devote to the construction of an apparatus that would demonstrate the value and certainty of his researches. It was when he had just completed the putting together of this new machine that he had been interrupted by Edith's visit, and his warning to her was, he believed, warranted by the peril to herself.

A few days later, he decided to make a final test, and then, if that was successful, to ship the apparatus to Carteret, where he hoped to exhibit it to the one man capable of judging of its value — to James Tancredi, the author of the brilliant treatise he had so long studied. Again and again he made the calculations and experiments, submitting himself to the operation of the machine, and recording the results for his own guidance. He believed that he could control the operations of the human organism by means of agencies thus brought to bear, and had even subjected his own skin to certain disease-germs so that he might demonstrate their cure.

At length, satisfied with his test, he took the machine apart and prepared to pack it for trans-

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portation. Going into one of the attic lofts, he selected an old trunk he had used during his college days, and, though it was well-battered and a little large for his purpose, he took it to the laboratory, put in the apparatus, and filled the whole with old newspapers until he thought the brittle parts were safe.

It was night when he finished, and he decided he would send the trunk to the city some time the next day. But he had over-tired his brain, and found it hard to sleep. He caught himself mentally going over and over every step in the process, until it was apparent that so long as it was possible for him to modify the apparatus he would never feel at rest. Therefore, for his own sake, it would be well to ship it as early in the morning as he could wake.

Then he fell asleep, and slept quietly till sunrise. He had left the curtains of his room drawn up, and woke as soon as the daylight came. Remembering his resolution of the night before, Paul dressed at once, carried the trunk downstairs, put it into a light carriage, and took it down to the station. He had to wait for the office to open, and was shaking with the cold of the sharp morning air when the agent came. Then he shipped the trunk to himself at the Central Station in Carteret, and returned home, relieved that the apparatus was at last beyond his reach.

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But there was still more than an hour before breakfast, and, as Paul entered the house, there occurred to him a slight modification of one part of the machine. He had in the attic the first and cruder apparatus he had made, and, though he laughed at his own weakness, he stole softly up the stairs and into his laboratory. He adjusted the apparatus, turned on the electric current, and set it in motion; and then began to prepare a chemical combination used in the test.

Adolph Breen had spent a more restless night than his cousin Paul. He had stopped at John Strain's house on his way home, and Constance had made a palpable excuse for not seeing him. More than this, Abigail Alice, perceiving his chagrin, had told him plainly that in her judgment his suit was hopeless unless he managed to put Paul out of the running. She had ridiculed his somewhat stilted expressions of affection for the girl, but, at the same time, had assured him that if such was his choice, questionable as was his taste, she was prepared by reason of the offensive and defensive alliance existing between them to give him all possible aid. Therefore, he would be wise to put on his thinking-cap, remembering that all things were fair in love as in war. And Adolph had gone home to a sleepless bed, tormented by jealousy, rent by passion, with the grim determination forming within him

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that in some way, he cared not how, he would frustrate Paul's pretensions and have Constance for himself. The dawn found him unrefreshed; so, hastily dressing, he hurried out of the house, thinking that a stroll through the woodland lining the bank of the river might cool his blood and coalesce his excited and disjointed thoughts.

Edith Breen, having completed all her preparations for her flight from home, had stolen up into the attic that morning, during Paul's absence, meaning to slip out of the house before the family rose. She had clipped off her pretty hair, and put on the boy's clothes, and was just about to creep down-stairs when Paul returned from his visit to the station. She shrank back into the darkness and remained quiet while he busied himself over his apparatus. But, when it was put into motion, her curiosity was so great that she forgot all prudence, forgot her change of costume, and tip-toed to the door of the laboratory where Paul was at work.

He had, for the first time, left the door slightly ajar, and Edith, all breathless, pushed it softly open. Paul, intent over the machine, did not turn. She pushed the door a little wider, peering eagerly; it came against the light stand upon which the chemicals were standing, and the little table tipped and began to fall.

Then Paul, hearing the tinkling glass, turned; he

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saw Edith's head thrust through the doorway, and had just cried out sharply " Edith, —" when the contents of the table reached the floor; there was a report like that of a revolver; the chemicals exploded, and Paul fell insensible and lay as if dead. The electric and chemical apparatus, struck by his falling body, slipped from the bench, and covered the floor with its fragments.

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CHAPTER VIII

ED FLYAWAY AND SOCI'TY DAN

EDITH turned cold and rigid under the petrifying clutch of terror. Paul was hurt, and she was to blame. Paul might even be dead, else why should he lie there motionless, unknowing, the ghastly wax image of himself? All her vague notions of crime and its punishment beset her with threats. Since she had done wrong, she must pay the penalty. Oh, what should she do; what should she do?

Her strong, vital forces, returning triumphant, sent their answer thrilling through her veins. Do? Why, what she had just planned to do. Run away, of course, out into that unknown, fascinating world of wandering, where no one bothered, no one restricted, no one said No. Was she not already prepared down to the smallest item of appropriate costume? And could there be a better hour than this very one in which she had been unobserved except by the person from whom, above all, she must now flee, but who could not follow? A reckless satisfaction convinced her that, whether she

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would or no, an end of hesitation and delay had come. As if by force, her decision was final, and she must go.

Together with these stronger feelings, developing into resolution beyond her years, there was that childish curiosity, innate, persistent. She was alone, at length, in the forbidden room. This was her last, her only chance. What, then, should she stretch out her hand and take? What a delight it would be to rummage through the drawers of that bench, to take down every mysterious article from that shelf — if only, oh, if only that awful, still presence wasn't there on the floor; and yet, wasn't it better that it should be still, since her will was so imperative?

She was hot, she was cold; anxious to stay, eager to go; at one moment sure that Paul was dead, and the very next positive that his eyes were open; pulled forward and back by desire and fear; the puppet at once of inexperience and experience. She sidled cautiously around the room, prying into every nook and crevice. As she groped among the fragments on the floor, she cut her finger on a lot of broken glass, and some blood dripped down near Paul's head before she knew it. But a silver-bound note-book, which lay on the bench, kept drawing her on. She had often seen Paul make strange figures in it; she had often begged him to at least

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"BUT A SILVER-BOUND NOTE-BOOK . . . KEPT DRAWING HER ON."

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let her look at it, but in vain. Now was her chance, her last, her only chance. She thrust the book into her pocket, crying out from the pain of her cut finger as she did so; and then, when no response or notice came from that grim, stiffened form before her, she sobbed:

"Oh, he must be dead," and darted from the room in a sudden panic.

A moment later, the picturesque and dapper form of a lad crept down the stairs from the attic, close to the wall, poising now and again on tip-toe, with finger on lips, and then sped through the rear-door into the seclusion of the wooded plantation, winding over the river-bank. The slim, flashing feet were indeed light, but Edith's heart, fluttering within such strange apparel, was lighter still. She had escaped; no one had seen her, no one had heard her. The unknown, fascinating world was now before her, and clearly, oh, so clearly, she could see the broad road traversing it, over which she should stroll from pleasure to pleasure, and from wonder to wonder. The fear of punishment, the loom and threat of death, were forgotten. Like some fair, young denizen of the woodland, without reflection, without compunction, she tripped blithely along, until a slight touch on her shoulder and the sound of a mocking voice brought her face to face again with terrifying realities.

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"What is all this, Edith?" asked Adolph, as, cool, calm and smiling, he tried to hold the shrinking girl out into full view. "Is it burlesque or melodrama? You favor both, I think. Why, you must be going to be Ed Flyaway in dead earnest!"

This name Adolph had given her, in joke, after one of her escapades.

A burst of tears accompanied Edith back from fairyland, and she clung to Adolph in ignominious helplessness. "Oh, Adolph, dear Adolph," she sobbed, "you won't tell on me, you will help me, you will let me go?" And she blurted out all that had happened.

Crises in life have a way of arriving unexpectedly like some inspecting commander-in-chief, but their mandates are none the less insistent for that. Adolph's morning stroll had restored his normal equanimity, without which he always felt himself to be in a sort of moral undress; but it had not made clear to him how he was to win Constance and dispose of Paul. Now, with Paul dying or dead, Constance seemed more attainable. Fate had removed one difficulty in his way; would not the disappearance of this rash child remove yet another? There was the vast fortune left by Neil Breen, that fortune which had made him hate his cousins for having what he had not. If Paul were dead, and Edith missing, would not the law, in five short years,

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give it to his own father, — already an old man, whose only heir he was? Constance in any and all circumstances would be adorable, it was true; but Constance, with all that money can give in addition — what vistas of bliss, and delight, of gratified ambitions, of pomp and station, stretched endlessly before him. Was not the hazard worth the throw; and was he not a faint-hearted weakling to refuse the chance that fate came tendering? Even before he realized that he had decided, Adolph's face grew portentously grave.

"Poor child," he said, shaking his head, "you are in an awful fix, to be sure. No one will believe it was an accident; you and Paul got along together too badly for that. I'll keep your secret safe, never fear; and I shouldn't feel justified in stopping you — why, I hate to think of what might happen if I did. After all, liberty is the thing. Take a bright, handsome lad, such as you appear, with the stout heart that you really have; why, the world is his cocoanut, full of meat and drink for the breaking. It isn't such a bad thing when one is young and full of life to see what's going on. There's a heap of fun and excitement, just as there's plenty of sunshine; and pleasure is all the more delightful for coming after a storm. But to be locked up in a Reformatory, kept in close, gloomy quarters, behind iron bars, with the coarsest food and clothing, sew-

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ing all day long under the eye of a termagant, with visitors staring and jeering at you — "

Adolph stopped short, and his face resumed its look of smiling satisfaction as he watched Edith rush blindly away. "I'll hurry to the office," he mused, "but first pretend to the servant I have an early engagement there. If I'm not at home no one can wonder why I do not look for Paul."

Edith, panic-stricken, dashed down the bank to the river. The vision of a leisurely stroll over the world's highway had vanished. All her fears, which even at their height had been tinged with a sort of hopeful unreality, now returned, vivified, exigent, insistent, through Adolph's dreadful warning. She must hurry away, far away, as fast as a train could carry her, before it was too late. Not the shock of the explosion, not the glare of Paul's livid face, had aroused such terrors. It was a white-lipped lad, with trembling knees, who stood by the railway track, looking up and down for a place of refuge.

In the vagabond bits of knowledge which thought, habit and reading had caused her to pick up, Edith had somehow learned that persons might hide themselves in freight-cars and thus be borne unsuspected to the uttermost parts of the earth. The idea was as practical as it was attractive, for she had no money. She had, indeed, intended asking some of Adolph,

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but that she could do later by letter. Meanwhile it was far safer that she should not risk buying a ticket at the station.

A freight-car usually stood on the siding, just below, for the reception of local shipments. Yes, there was one there now, and not a person apparently within sight. Edith hurried to it, and, jumping on the little iron step, tugged with all her strength at the padlock securing the sliding side-door.

"You may git there sometime within the next cent'ry, I shud say," remarked a husky voice, "if flesh and mater'al hold out."

Edith half fell, half sprang to the ground. A short, stubby man stood close beside her, a clay pipe between his teeth, a good-natured smile broadening his unshaven and grimy face. His clothing was primitive. A rimless derby, stuck on one side of the head; a blue jumper, open at the throat; a pair of corduroys, tight along the calves, as if having seen the better days of riding-service; and a pair of brogans, mostly hob-nailed soles, completed the tale. A match was carefully tucked over his ear like a penholder. There was squalor, there was degradation about the man; but just as evident was a happy-go-lucky spirit which inspired Edith with a kind of desperate confidence.

"You haven't got anything to do with the road,

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have you?" she faltered, "you won't stop me from hiding in there, will you? I'll do no harm."

The man took a cigar-stump from his pocket, and crumpled it into his pipe. With a jack-knife he deftly split the match, carried over his ear, into eight parts lengthwise. One of these he kindled by a dexterous twist between two finger-nails, and ignited the tobacco with it. The others he folded away in the layers of a red handkerchief. Then, after a luxurious puff, he answered.

"C'nnected with the road? Nope, unly as a sorter soopernum'ry sarvin' without pay. Stop yer? Not on yer life. I'll put yer nex' to the inside, all right, young feller, seein' thet's your game, thet is —" and here the bluff tones changed into the whine of the professional cadger, "thet is, if you fulfils the Scriptur' and gives a trifle from your plinty to my nawthin'."

"What is your name, please?" asked Edith, like a true woman, hoping for better things through talk.

"Soci'ty Dan they mostly calls me."

"Soci'ty? Why Soci'ty?"

"Oh, becuz I'm so free and easy and permiscus, I s'pose; and what's on your wisitin' card?"

"Oh, I'm Ed Flyaway," replied Edith, giving the nickname Adolph had just brought to her mind, "but what's in a name anyway?"

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"There's a good deal in it, my bucky, if you're up aginst a sicond offinse. But come, cough up the gelt, the mazooma, the long greens, if you wants an exclusive burt' on this air-line."

"I have nothing but this," said the girl with brimming eyes. "I left very unexpectedly — oh, dear, you must know, I ran away. Won't you take it and help me?"

"A note-book filled with high-old-glyphics," mused Soci'ty Dan. "It ain't much, as the drownin' man said when he grabbed the straw; but, arter all, it's got silver corners and will do for a go of booze at all ewents. It's allus the way: thim thet has nawthin' will give up iverythin', and thim thet has iverythin' will give up nawthin'. Why, I struck a withered old pelican, the mawn, and I ast her most obsecus, so I did, for a bit of help. 'Give you somethin',' says she, 'Yes, so I will and gladly. I'll give you over to the fust perleece in sight.' I seen right enough she wud; so I chucked a brick t'roo her plate-glass door with me compliments, and skedoozled. Strain is her name, they say, and strain her natur'; and she'd swaller a full-sized camel with j'y, afore she let go of a stunted gnat.

"As for the book, my lob-lolly lad, I'll take it and wilcome," continued Soci'ty, as he thrust it inside of his jumper; "but mark me wud, you're makin' a big mistake, in the inciptun of your career,

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as a blind un cud see, to be leavin' a luxurus home without bein' properly loaded. To run away with the stuff aboard is good; to run towards it ain't bad; but to run from it, why, thet's sooicide; yes, an' since we're speakin' of runnin', race sooicide, I might say."

Having thus given vent to his considerate judgment, Soci'ty proved as good as his word. He fetched out an iron bit from the resourceful depths of his jumper, and, in an instant, had pried off the staple holding the padlock. "A handy t'ing to hev' in the fam'bly — some odder wan's fam'bly," he reflected, as he helped Edith up and drew the door behind them; "but its absince is desirable whin they are a-wukkin' of the third degree on you at Hidquarters."

The interior of the car was pretty well filled with miscellaneous freight, but, off in one corner, where an old trunk had been placed, there was a little space in which a lad of Edith's size might curl up and lie concealed. No sooner had Soci'ty selected the spot as the one best adapted for conditions he so well understood, than the girl cried out in joyous concurrence, "Yes, let me lie there. That is Paul's trunk, and I won't feel so lonesome."

"Thin Paul must hev' come over in the Mayflower or the steerage, belike," Soci'ty remarked with a disdainful glance at the ancient receptacle.

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Edith was so exhausted by the clash of sensations through which she had passed, so weary of seeking the end of the mesh of strange events in which she had entangled herself, that, with the supineness of a little child, whose day had been over-long, she lay down against the trunk and straightway went to sleep. There was something in this innocent and trustful abandon which affected Soci'ty with a vague remembrance of that remote time when he, too, may have known and then lacked tender care, and he stood watching wistfully, like one at a door forever closed.

Presently Edith moved in order to lie more comfortably, and raised her hand with familiar gesture as if to brush away from her pillow the heavy braids of hair which, only a few hours before, she had sacrificed to her mad plan. Soci'ty's trained observation instantly interpreted the significance of this unconscious and natural impulse. "A gurl, a young gurl, bedad!" he whispered, awestruck; "well, Gawd save us all, for the divil is puttin' in double licks these degin'ret days." And, sliding to the door, and driving back the staple, he hurried away on hospitable cares intent.

Alas for that burning thirst, destined to remain unquenched through many a dreary can of tepid water! As Soci'ty was leaving the pawnshop, having pledged the silver-bound note-book for a

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sum small but sufficient to his needs, he noticed a sealed package sticking out of the pocket of a customer awaiting his turn in an adjacent booth. As instinctively as Edith had sought to brush back her hair, he stretched out his hand and snatched the tempting prize.

Unfortunately, the owner's wits and nerves were keyed up to that pitch of expectancy which rules when pressing troubles are about to be relieved. He turned like a flash and throttled the thief. A small boy shot over the counter, giving ready assistance. The burglar-alarm rang; the door was slammed and bolted; and Soci'ty lay overcome on the floor, pressed down by a half-ton of human rage until the police should come and deliver him over to the tormentors.

Such a little thing as being caught in the act did not disconcert a man of Soci'ty's experience. He knew very well what he wanted to do before it was too late. Already his agile hand was worming its way to accomplish it. Under ordinary circumstances his object undoubtedly would have been to cast from his person the incriminatory iron bit. But now a more unselfish thought inspired him. The little girl, so wild, so passionately wild, to run away! Should he let her people, her pursuers, gain a possible clue through his mischance? There was no likelihood of the pawnbroker volunteering any in-

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formation relative to his pledge, but should the police, when they searched him, find the ticket —

"What are you a-doin' there?" demanded one of his captors fiercely.

"Unly takin' a katchoo to make me prisince more refined and agreeable in these clus quarters," gasped Soci'ty, as he chewed up and swallowed the pawn-ticket for the silver-bound note-book.

A policeman came bustling in, recognizing the culprit with that rough affability which obtains between officers of the law and old offenders.

"I didn't think it of you, Soci'ty, really I didn't," he said reproachfully, as he led away his unresisting prisoner. "An old lag like you caught with the goods on him; it's too bad, it's too bad. Well, a ten-specker is the least that's coming to you, and it's coming quick, too. The Grand Jury's sitting; the Oyer's in full blast. Say, you'll be railroaded at the rate of the special limited express."

"Railroaded," Soci'ty repeated with a resigned smile. "That's all right. I'm a sorter sooper-num'ry, you know, sarvin' without pay."

Meanwhile, a freight train was puffing along the river road, like some stale runner making more noise than speed. In the cab, the engineer and fireman were busy over some defect in the machinery, complaining bitterly the while that they had been sent out with an old and imperfect engine, and yet were

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expected to keep a clear track for the flyer, following still many miles behind. Presently, however, the trouble, whatever it was, seemed rectified, and under increasing steam the miles began to roll regularly and rapidly away. The two men settled back in their seats on either side, reassured by the monotonous beat of the drivers on the rails that the to-day would be as the many yesterdays had been. So habit lessens fear, giving fixity and substance to that life which is but the vapor that appeareth.

In the rear car, with her shorn head pillowed on Paul's old trunk, Edith was sleeping, happy in impossible dreams, as, unknowing and unknown, she was borne along. Poor, wayward child, a type of poor, wayward humanity. So, too, the great earth swings through space, hurrying its human freight, unknowing and unknown, to that awakening from dreams which is death.

Again the engine ran sluggishly, with waste of steam from the cylinders, hindering and befogging the efforts of the crew. The security of continued power gave way to wild apprehension as the driving-wheels at length hung set and stationary. The engineer sounded the whistle piercingly. The fireman ran back, around the curve just passed, with red flag and torpedoes. The hands, lolling half-asleep in the sunshine on the tops of the cars, or smoking and yarning on the benches in the caboose, sprang,

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alert and startled, to the ground, well aware that any derangement in the carefully adjusted mechanism of the road meant disaster. On all sides there was apprehension — the selfish impulse of personal safety — save in the rear car, where Edith was still sleeping peacefully, unknowing and unknown.

It is wonderful how insidiously a greater speed consumes the advantage of a lesser speed, when that lesser speed has ceased. The following flyer made up its distance behind in a twinkling of mile-posts. Before the fireman had a clear view of the track around the curve irresistible power swept by him as contemptuously as if he were a speck of the dust that its onset raised. The air rent and rocked with the shock of impact and explosion, and where the freight train had halted was now a horrible confusion of wrecked and overturned cars.

But the rear car, the rear car! The one car containing, though unknowing and unknown, that human interest, intense in life, intenser in death! Over its split and ground fragments a light flame already swept, completing the destruction!

The men fought the fire perfunctorily for a while, and then ceased altogether. What difference did it make about a lot of ruined stuff that would have to be paid for anyway, since luckily there were no lives in peril? And so they watched idly, until smouldering succeeded the burst and roar of con-

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flagration like the low, contented growl of a satiated beast. Then pole and pick were plied lustily to clear the way for traffic.

As the men hauled out and raked over the undermost part, less thoroughly incinerated, there was a wild tossing of stalwart hands, a ghastly whitening of begrimed faces, a murmur of horror, inarticulate, incoherent, frenzied; for a childish form was exposed, naked, black, distorted, half-consumed, lying in the very midst of a skeleton of a trunk's framework, to which the ash of a label still clung!

"My God, my God," cried one of the men at length, voicing the universal conviction, "the body of a murdered girl was boxed up in that trunk and shipped as freight!"

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CHAPTER IX

THE CORONER'S VERDICT

MRS. BREEN had kept house long enough to be aware that there were certain impossibilities in household economy. When younger, she had soon seen that a late breakfast was the ruin of the day's work, and had done her best by means of "rising bells," special notifications, alarm-clocks and so on, to bring all the family together in good season for the morning meal.

But this ideal had been long abandoned, and she now enforced penalties instead. "Any one who wants a warm breakfast must get up while it is on the table" was her inflexible rule, and that had worked to the discomfort of Paul and of Edith, both of whom were night-owls. Paul, lost in his scientific studies or experiments, was only too likely to forget fatigue and remain in the laboratory until the small hours; and Edith had never considered rules as other than challenges to combat, and, when she had taken to fiction, she found night the best time

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for escaping the interruptions of prosaic real life.

Consequently, on the morning of the accident in Paul's laboratory, the absence of these two from the breakfast-table had caused no surprise; that was the usual order, and gave rise to only the usual annoyance. But Adolph's absence was a different matter, since he was regularity and punctuality in one, and Mrs. Breen was about to make inquiries when the servant anticipated them by explaining "Mr. Adolph had gone to the city by an early train, and had asked that you be told he was very sorry, Mum. He had left some valooable papers out of the safe, by mistake, and must put them away before anny clerks kem in. He said he would get breakfast in the city, so he wud."

So, after Mr. and Mrs. Breen had breakfasted alone, Mr. Breen left for the station, and Mrs. Breen sat down "just to run over the headings of the newspaper" — which often took her more than an hour's avid reading.

Paul lay for nearly three hours unconscious. Then he awoke as one wakes from deep sleep, regaining the senses one by one. The back of his head was resting on the board flooring, and the pain caused by that was his first knowledge of his state. He moved uneasily, and the glass-fragments rattled as they were pushed aside. The sound

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brought him more to himself, but he still felt too weak and confused to think at all clearly. He looked about him, and burst out laughing.

"That's funny," he exclaimed. "I must have smashed something, I guess."

He picked up one of the pieces of glass, and looked at it curiously. "Hum," said he, after a puzzled inspection, "it looks like some of those crucibles and things I bought after leaving the medical school. Now, why in the world did I ever spend so much money on that trash?" He rose, carefully selecting clear spaces on the floor so as not to cut himself on the glass. When he could stand — he felt weak and uncertain — he put his hand to his head, and, taking it down, found blood on his fingers. "Whew," said he, "I must have cut myself somewhere, after all. I'll go to my room and wash up. What did I come up here for, anyway?"

He stood still and tried to remember, but his head whirled with the effort. "It's no use," said he, "I must have muddled my brain when I fell. I remember coming up here to look for something — what was it? I think I went into the back of the attic, and pulled out the old dressing-cases and trunks; but why did I do such an asinine thing, and how did I land among all this brass and glass and trash? Queer! I can't recall — it seems I meant to send something — some of my chemicals

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or apparatus, maybe — to the city. But no, that can't be true, for here's the stuff lying about the room."

Once more, Paul put his hand to his head with an expression of distress and confusion; and again, on removing it, he found blood on his fingers. That at least was something definite, and so was his disordered clothing; so he went rather tremulously to his room, took a bath and made a careful toilet, which freshened his appearance. But he felt uneasy and conscious that his memory was at fault. He, therefore, returned to the attic, swept up the fragments of his broken apparatus and dumped them into a big trash-basket. Near where he had lain there was a little hammer lying over a blood-stain on the floor. "Ah," he exclaimed, "that explains how I hurt my head. It must have been that I fell, and my head struck the hammer."

From a strong desire for occupation, he put the room into some sort of order, but still the perplexing problem of what had happened oppressed him. "It's no use," he cried impatiently. "I do think that I was trying some experiment, but, what it was all about Heaven only knows. I must have been working too hard, for my mind is a blank on that subject. What was I doing up here this morning? I feel like a man waked out of a dream — only I don't recall the dream." Then he began to wonder

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what time it was, and, looking at his watch, saw it was about half-past nine. "Goodness!" he exclaimed, "they must have finished breakfast, and I am ravenous. I'll go down at once; but mum is the word. I don't want any one to suspect I've lost my senses."

Paul found himself forced to go slowly, holding to the hand-rail, for his steps were uncertain, and his head turned dizzy now and then. Mrs. Breen was by the window of the breakfast-room, reading her paper. She was distant, conscientiously so because of his tardiness, so he went to the table, meaning to forage for himself. He noticed that Edith's place was still undisturbed, and he smiled to think that this of itself was enough to account for his aunt's taciturnity.

Suddenly there came the sound of a latch-key at the front-door. The rattling was noticeable because it was so rapid and irregular. Mrs. Breen and Paul looked up in surprise, and then the door was flung open. Philip Breen rushed in with his hat on, and, turning to his wife, said in a low tone that was made terrifying by his pale face and trembling lips: —

"Do you know anything about Edith?"

"Edith?" Mrs. Breen repeated; "she is not up yet."

"Send up — no, go up to her room," said her husband, "at once."

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Mrs. Breen left the room without a word, and Philip, turning to his nephew, said still in the same low tone: — "There's been a collision on the road, and the cars caught fire. They've found a body, and I'm afraid — I'm afraid — I don't see how it is possible though."

Paul rose, confused and white. Nothing was clear to him, but the mention of the railroad recalled vaguely for the moment his trip to the station. "But what about the trunk?" he stammered.

Mr. Breen looked amazed at this queer question. Before he could answer, Mrs. Breen had returned.

"She isn't there," she cried. "Oh, Philip, what is it? — what is it?"

"Be quiet," Mr. Breen replied. "There has been an accident on the road, and they have found among the ruins of one of the cars the body of a young girl, — and — "

Mrs. Breen began to cry.

"Now, there, there," continued her husband soothingly, "it may all be a mistake. They're not sure. But if Edith can't be found — "

Paul could hardly follow their words. His head whirled, and he repeated to himself, "If Edith can't be found — " Then he spoke aloud: — "What is it, Uncle Philip? Is Edith missing? — has she run away again?"

Mr. Breen turned to him sharply. "Paul — I

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never knew you so slow-witted. Don't you understand me? They think she has been killed."

"Killed? Killed? How?"

"Killed in a railway accident. When did you see her last?"

Paul tried to think, and then slowly answered as he gathered his wits together: — "I don't know exactly. I was hurt this morning, on the head, and my mind is all confused, uncle. I haven't seen Edith since last night at dinner, I believe. I don't remember, and it may be — But — I can't realize it. Edith dead?" Paul spoke like one half dreaming. His brain was benumbed; his manner was apathetic.

Mr. Breen, struck by his apparent indifference, retorted angrily. "You hurt? I don't see anything the matter; you look all right. But you don't seem a bit sorry. Haven't you a heart in you, Paul? I never thought you were very fond of your sister — but when the poor girl — " Here his voice broke and he went abruptly out of the room. Mrs. Breen followed him, her hands clutching her broad bosom, usually so placid, and Paul was left alone. He went up to his own room, and sat down in a lounging chair. He repeated to himself, "Edith is dead; Edith is killed;" and then ruminated stupidly upon his words, as if they were in a forgotten tongue.

Early in the afternoon, Adolph returned from the city, summoned by a telegram from his father. He

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stopped at the station, and positively identified the stark remains as those of the light-hearted child whom he had sent on her way to her death only a few hours before. Then he hurried home, exalted by the speedy realization of his hopes; only to find in Philip Breen's bitter account of Paul's queer behavior a new complication which must be met.

"Have you seen Paul, Adolph?" his father asked, after his first exclamatory remarks.

Adolph shook his head, but remained silent; startled to learn that Paul was alive and apparently uninjured, and with wits all alert to work out some advantage for himself from the changed situation.

"He hurt me," continued Philip Breen. "I knew he had no particular sympathy with his poor sister, but — by the Lord Harry — I've seen a man more moved over the death of a bull-pup, Adolph. He seemed as cool, as indifferent as — Why, he made me want to throttle him."

"I can hardly believe you," replied Adolph, slowly, seeing light, but feeling his way; "Paul may be hard-hearted, but I always thought him prudent, at least."

"Prudent?" repeated his father, puzzled to make out Adolph's meaning. "I don't see why you say that?"

"Why, father, I shouldn't have spoken so about Paul, perhaps. That's the worst of having studied

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law. It only occurred to me that since Paul will inherit the estate, now that Edith is not living, it would be commented on if he seemed not to mourn for her. I'm sorry I said it; but — "

"You're right," Philip Breen interrupted. "And yet, if I really believed Paul was thinking of money at such a time, by — No, I can't believe it. Yet — he was cool enough. Oh, I don't know what to think. Poor Edith, poor, foolish child, so bright, so pretty. I can't get over it. I didn't know how much I cared for her until — Leave me alone, Adolph, my boy; I must fight it out by myself; and then — "

"Yes, try to compose yourself," said Adolph. "There is nothing we can do at present. The coroner is in charge; there will have to be an inquest. After a while, we must consult together; but there is time for that."

Adolph went directly to Paul's room. To his knock came the reply, "Who is it?" but when he answered, Paul said eagerly, "Come in, I wanted to see you."

Paul was seated by a little table, with his head on his hands. He began at once: "Tell me, what is all this about Edith? They say she is dead, and somehow, I don't seem able to think so. Isn't it a mistake?"

"It is no mistake," Adolph replied. "I saw her

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body at the station. She is dead, indeed, poor child."

"Horrible, horrible," Paul moaned. "I cannot make it real. What do you suppose has come over me? I got up early this morning — I went to the station, I think — "

"What for?" asked Adolph, surprised.

Paul looked at him blankly. "Adolph, I don't know," he answered. "It's all a muddle to me. I had a fall, and something's gone wrong in my brain. I cannot get anything straight. I hear you say 'Edith is dead.' I repeat the words to myself, but they do not affect me — yet. There is a mist over my mind."

Adolph was watching, with an eye, keen, hard and cruel. He sat for a while, playing with a paper-knife on the table. Then he said, without taking his gaze from his cousin's face: —

"It's most unfortunate, Paul; most unfortunate."

"What is most unfortunate?" Paul inquired.

"Why, you must know that now you will come into Edith's property — "

"Shall I?"

Adolph's lip curled. "Drop that," he went on; "don't try to play the innocent with me. You're no fool, except about your old messes and bottles, and I've always believed they were all a pretence. You may not care about your sister's death; but,

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if you want to keep people's good opinion, you had better show some feeling over it. And this cock-and-bull story about mist in your mind won't go down with anybody. Don't try it, I say. When were you at the station? — and what for?"

"This morning — very early. I went to see something about a trunk."

"What trunk?"

"I don't know," Paul replied, like a child puzzled by a problem.

"It's my opinion," Adolph continued, "that you're dopey. I always wondered what kept you up there in that lunatic cell in the attic. Did you have any opium, up there?"

"Opium? Not opium; but I did have laudanum. I used to keep it for — for my experiments."

"Experiments be hanged. What did you hope to accomplish by them? Did they ever amount to anything?"

"I think not," said Paul, drearily. "I know I smashed all my apparatus — "

"Of course, you did. You were dopey, I say. Muddling up there, and playing for time. And you've taken a dose this morning. You're off your head, Paul, and had better sober up, or you may find yourself in trouble before long."

"I don't think I took anything; I never do touch such things," Paul went on, still dispassionately.

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"But, Adolph, I don't know. I remember going to the attic —"

"What for?"

"I don't remember. For the trunk, I think. The next thing I recall is being at the station, and then I don't know anything more until I woke up, lying on the floor, with a wound in my head —"

"A wound? Where?"

Paul put his hand to the back of his head. Adolph arose, went behind him, and looked carefully, but could find nothing.

"Paul," he said, "you are in a pipe-dream. There is no wound on your head."

"But there was blood on my hand where I touched it."

"Then, it wasn't your blood, or there wasn't any."

"But there is some blood on that towel over there," Paul insisted.

"Then," said Adolph even more impressively, "it isn't your own. Paul — you have been out of your senses, and the Lord only knows what has happened during that time. Listen to me, if you can keep your head clear of that damned drug for an instant. Edith's body, the body of your sister, upon whose death your material happiness depends, was found in the wreck of your trunk. So — you can think that over at your leisure. I want you to know

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this. I learned it when I came by the station. I'm afraid to say what may happen to you if you can't tell a better story than you have told me. You'd better pull your wits together and try." And Adolph left him.

Paul heard the words, and afterwards they came back to him in their full meaning. But now they sounded muffled, and from afar, as did the tidings of Edith's death. He made several vain efforts to think connectedly; but, exhausted by the physical and mental shocks he had successively undergone, he fell asleep where he sat, murmuring: — "Did I take laudanum? What is it that clogs my brain? I don't know; oh, God, I can't remember!"

When Paul awoke, he was ravenously hungry again. He ate something in his own room, for he was beginning to understand from the averted faces of the servants, and the general concurrence in his seclusion, the position in which he was placed by his sister's death. Then he wandered out, and, driven more by instinct than by any reason he could have given, he went to John Strain's house, and asked for Constance Sanderson. She was his only confidante; perhaps she could restore him to himself.

And perhaps Constance, who had already heard something of the story, and who was more intensely alarmed than she dared betray, might, through the

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guidance of that divine sympathy, which is one of the attributes of love, have led his troubled thoughts back to the purposes which had inspired him and thence on to what but yesterday had seemed the beginning of their realization, had not another feminine passion, less retiring, more alert and pertinacious, and as evil as hers was good, prevented. She began by advising Paul to attend at once to his state of health — upon that all else might depend. "Go without delay to a doctor," she entreated.

"Doctor?" repeated Paul bitterly. "Don't I look sound and well in every respect? Why should I go to a doctor? And who is there that can minister to a mind diseased?"

"No one can under this honest roof," cried a strident voice; and Abigail Alice, aflame with her instinctive hatred of Paul, entered the room, and stood significantly pointing to the door. "Miss Sanderson," she continued, "if you have any respect for my authority, or any wish to keep your position here under it, you will at once go upstairs. And you, sir, you who are involved in the foulest deed that ever disgraced humanity, you leave this house instantly, or I will send for the police, who must be looking for you, to put you out."

As Constance hesitated, glancing toward Paul, with her hands half outstretched, a dull, heavy look crept over his face. He bowed his head; without a

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word, without looking to right or left, he went out of the house, the personification of stolidity, yawning as he went. And when he reached home, in a stupor, resembling somnambulism, he threw himself on his bed, and sank at once into a dreamless sleep that lasted unbroken until morning.

That day, the inquest was held. From the facts established there seemed no escape from the conclusion that the trunk in the burning wreck had contained the body of Edith Breen. The agent testified that Paul had shipped this trunk, addressed to himself, to be delivered at the Central Station in Carteret. Adolph, with apparent reluctance, deposed as to his interview with Paul. Mr. Breen produced the will of his brother Neil, showing how material an interest Paul had in his sister's death, and then detailed his unfeeling conduct when informed of that event. Mrs. Breen testified to the quarrel between Edith and Paul, and his threats to her, subsequently repeated to herself. Paul, on going to the stand of his own volition, made an unfavorable impression by his confused and unsatisfactory account of his actions. Everything pointed out the one and only criminal. Without leaving their seats, the jury rendered a verdict that Edith Breen had been done to death by her brother, Paul Breen. Thereupon he was committed without bail, charged with deliberate and premeditated murder.

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CHAPTER X

THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PEOPLE

A POLITICAL uprising of the people is likely to be a temporary triumph of logic. The right man for once is chosen for the right place, and then there is a relapse to those haphazard methods of luck and influence which make our boasted civilization not only free but easy.

John Strain's fight against local corruption, adroitly reinforced as it was by Adolph's astute methods, had its logical results. In the fall, he was swept into the office of district attorney by a tremendous majority. Then the ordinary citizen devoted himself once more to his private affairs, confident that public business, for a time at least, would receive an equal attention.

Public business at this juncture, in the minds of the many, meant the "Breen Murder Case." Though the defendant had waived examination, and, since his first incoherent protestations of innocence, had preserved a moody silence, popular indignation against him was still evident in wild talk

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on the streets, and in the wilder gestures of the crowd that daily thronged about the jail, causing the sheriff to keep double watch and ward. Nothing could be plainer to a man of Strain's keenness than that a thorough and successful prosecution of this notable case would make him master of his own political future.

And yet, though he had his witnesses well in hand, ready for the meeting of the Grand Jury, to the vigilant, tireless eyes of one person he showed little of that zeal which ordinarily inspired him in the conduct of an important matter. That person was his wife; and her jealousy not only interpreted the cause of his seeming lukewarmness, but suggested the methods by which it might be revivified and intensified to the detriment of the two beings whom, above all others, she detested.

Paul she had long hated for reasons vague, psychological, instinctive, yet satisfactory and conclusive. Now, that burning, insistent hatred of him included her kind, faithful and one-time congenial companion, Constance Sanderson, not only on his account, but also on her own, the girl's, and above all, on her husband's. It made no difference that she might very well know that the one and only reason why Constance was closeted frequently of late with John Strain was her pure affection for Paul, and her absolute faith in his innocence. They,

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who at first had scarcely spoken to each other, were now closeted together; while she, the wife, who ought to be the confidante, was shut out, ignored, as a negligible quantity. Did not that prove that her husband had had a sinister motive when he had induced her to employ this creature? Did not his present conduct tally with the slights and shames he had put on her for years? Well, so let it be; she had one stanch avenger, and that was herself!

When all the forces of a starved, unsatisfied nature are concentrated on a single object, they either find an opportunity or they make one. The next time that Adolph called, only to receive the monotonous message that "Miss Sanderson begged to be excused," Mrs. Strain beckoned him into her own sitting-room.

"She is shut up in the library, as usual, with John," she said viciously.

"Ah, improving each shining hour like our unexceptionable friend, the bee?"

"Improving each possible chance to say a good word for that abominable cousin of yours. I'm sorry to say so, Adolph, but Miss Sanderson has become the intermediary of that wretch to cause my husband to do less than his full duty. She neglects me shamefully, spending all her time in concocting schemes in the jail, and then carrying them out in the library. Mark my words: Let her once

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persuade John that Paul's pretended lapse of memory is real, the result of some accident, or better yet of a blow from Edith's unknown murderer, and, from being his prosecutor, he will become his partizan. He is a hard man, ah, yes, none knows it so well as I; but, above all things, he wishes to be a just one."

"And then?" asked Adolph easily.

"And then? Why, Paul will be vindicated; the crime will pass into the mysteries, soon to be forgotten, and they two will be happy on the fortune that ought to be yours. Yes, yours, in the course of time, when your father dies. Oh, I know very well what I'm talking about; John explained it all to me when the murder first came out, and before that girl had made him chicken-hearted. If Paul is convicted of having killed Edith, he will lose all title to an inheritance that thus would come only to him through his own wrong, and the entire property will go to your father as heir-at-law and next of kin of Neil Breen. But what's the use of talking about it; you know it much better than I do."

"Yes, I do know it," admitted Adolph, with a thoughtful sigh. "I have figured it all out, as any other lawyer would. And now, from what you say, I stand to lose both ducats and daughter."

"'Stand to lose?'" repeated Mrs. Strain

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fiercely. "A true man advances to win. You must destroy her interest in Paul, you must secure it for yourself —"

"She loves him, I fear — curse him that I must say it!"

"She loves herself more. Take a young woman like that, who has made her living, her position, by her own exertions, she has an absurdly high estimation of her reputation; not character, understand, but reputation. She will do anything rather than compromise herself, even change lovers, do you see? You men make me positively sick, the timid way you handle the women you desire as if they were porcelain. Now, what prevents you from turning Constance into your instrument? — one doesn't have to marry a girl in her station unless one wants to, you know. Why such lack of a little courage, a little ingenuity, of course, and not the lack, I promise you, of a serviceable friend?" So speaking, Mrs. Strain changed the subject abruptly, nor did Adolph succeed in recurring to it that evening.

There was something in the woman's words, insidious, insinuating, vibrating with unrestrained power, that inflamed Adolph's imagination. Since his parting talk with Edith, his nature had either deteriorated or developed — it surely had changed for the worse. He had stood on the Mount and

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yielded to the Temptation; thenceforth, whether or no he knew the better, he must choose the worse. Indeed, he had figured out all the contingencies of Paul's surprising misadventure. Already they had kept him silent, when a word would have set his cousin free; what active hostility might they not cause him to take, instigated as he now was by all the elemental passions!

What, then, had the woman meant, or, rather, how much had she meant? There was malice surely in her hints; was there also truth? If Constance was a mere creature of conventionalities, held in check by prudence, but not by principle, why shouldn't he have her instead of Paul? Already the poison had begun to work, already the girl, brought out from the glow of ideality into the glare of the market-place, seemed more to be desired than altogether desirable. She was beautiful, ah, yes; but rather as the flower to be plucked than the star to be adored!

So Adolph mused, going from bad to worse, not plotting yet, but willing to avail himself of a plot, and, in his wildest thoughts, finding encouragement in Mrs. Strain's assurance of a serviceable friend.

The house, which had been Judge Hazlett's, and now was John Strain's by conquest of marriage, was a broad and comfortable structure, with a great hallway running through the centre and extending up

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to the roof, giving a view of the successive floors with their rooms opening on galleries. Constance Sanderson's room was on the second floor. It had two doors; one to the gallery overlooking the main hall, and the other, which was never used and always locked, leading to a rear passage and thence to the servants' stairway.

Constance sat in this room, in somewhat melancholy thought, one evening, when the Strains were entertaining a few friends. She had refused to be present at the gathering, thereby arousing the displeasure of her mistress.

"I don't see why you act in such a ridiculous way," Mrs. Strain had said. "Everybody will know that you stay away on Paul Breen's account, and yet Adolph, his own cousin — more's the pity — is coming."

"Yes, Adolph puzzles me by his indifference," the girl had replied sadly. "It must be, of course, because he is so sure of Paul's innocence, but — "

"That's it, no doubt," the matron had interrupted with fine sarcasm. "Of course, every one thinks Paul is innocent. That is why they keep him locked up in a cage like some wild beast."

This conversation now recurred to Constance as one of the many hard things she had of late been forced to endure from Mrs. Strain. The woman's growing malignity towards her was too evident for

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question, but its cause seemed unfathomable. She knew that she had pleased at first; and surely she was trying even harder now. Under ordinary circumstances, her pride would have led her long since to leave her place, but on Paul's account she had remained, and, on his account, she would remain if possible. It must be that her daily accounts to John Strain of what Paul told her would win his confidence through the intrinsic strength of truth. The District Attorney was hard, every one said so; and she herself had struck repeatedly against the rough, unyielding substance of his nature, to be repelled as if from a rock. But yet, every one said, too, that he was just, and, oh, she believed it. Though he had waved aside her entreaties as impertinent, he had listened willingly to her arguments, anxious, seemingly, to give them the weight of conviction they carried to her.

As she recalled little incidents of consideration from this man, harsh, self-contained, grossly material though he was, Constance sought gratefully for something she might do or give to show her appreciation. She was so alone, so helpless, so poor. But yet did not he love old books, and was there not in her possession that memento of her father, cherished through the years as a sacred relic, yet which might well be devoted now to a still more sacred cause? So reflecting, the girl hurried over

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to the trunk in the corner and brought out the ancient volume, wrapped in white tissue-paper and tied with black ribbon. As she did so, a stealthy sound sent her to her feet with wildly throbbing bosom. A key grated in the lock of the side-door, and then turned. The side-door opened softly, and closed again; and Adolph Breen stood before her.

"How dare you — " she began.

"Hear me first," he interrupted with a reassuring gesture, "and remember that the people below are certain to put the worst construction on any outcry, and that there are things for which a man may be forgiven, but a woman, never. All I want is to have a frank and full understanding with you. The time has come when you must cast in your lot with me for good or for bad. You won't hear me? You're bound to disgrace yourself?" he whispered tremulously, torn by chagrin and fear, as Constance pressed by him, in her cold silence, the very type of abhorrence: "Well, go, then, you proud fool; but dare to mention my name, and I'll hang Paul — "

The decorous guests below were enjoying themselves mildly after their kind, when a door on the second gallery slammed violently, and Constance Sanderson, darting down the stairs, confronted Mrs. Strain as she came bustling forward.

"So it was you, madam," the girl exclaimed, pale, agitated, yet with an indomitable light in her

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eyes, "yes, it must have been you who contrived this foul insult against one who never injured you, one under your protection. Shame upon you, I say; shame in the name of pure womanhood."

For a moment, Mrs. Strain cowered, disconcerted, confused. Then she caught a glimpse of Adolph coming carelessly into the hall from the rear, as if ignorant of what had occurred. With the instantaneous, comprising vision which imminent necessity often gives to the feminine mind, she saw that, if her plotting had failed in one way, it might prove successful in another and even more desirable one. Constance's courage had evidently been stronger than had seemed probable; but would not the result of it drive away the girl in disgrace from her house?

Adolph must have protected himself in some fashion; his manner asserted that plainly. Likely enough he had threatened to work Paul's destruction; and she who had been so stout-hearted for her own sake would, with this in mind, prove as wax for the sake of her lover. Very well, then; it was the one chance to take. If the girl couldn't accuse, she might be accused with impunity.

"Hoity-toity," cried Mrs. Strain. "Do you think to face me down in my own house by such heroics? There is an explanation due from you to me, my young lady, not from me to you. I asked you kindly to join us this evening; but no, you pre-

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ferred for some reason to secrete yourself in your room. If you have been insulted, if you are blameless, tell us plainly just what has happened. We are all friends here."

"Yes, Miss Sanderson, we are all friends here," Adolph repeated gently, as he pressed forward.

Constance gasped, as well she might, for John Strain now pushed his broad shoulders through the throng. "Yes, speak up frankly and without fear," he said admonishingly. "You must realize that such intemperate words, uttered before my guests, can not pass unexplained under my roof."

"Your wife knows," she faltered; "she must have let him in through the side-door of my room."

"Let whom in, you hussy?" screamed Mrs. Strain; and those standing about nodded concurrence.

Constance looked full at Adolph. He smiled back a challenge in insolent superiority. She remembered his threat — she hesitated — she made up her mind. She dared not sacrifice Paul.

"I can not name him," she protested to Mrs. Strain, "but you did it."

"I did it? Oh, isn't the brazen wickedness of this creature beyond all bearing?" that lady retorted. "Don't you see, my husband, don't you see, my friends, what must have happened? Taking advantage of our little gathering, she managed to

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conceal some low admirer of hers in her room. Then — why then, they quarrelled, and exposure seemed to be upon them. He fled by the back way, and she, thinking they had been overheard — to shield him, to salve her shame — has trumped up this ridiculous story. It must be so; let her deny it if she dare. Why, not a week ago, she persuaded me to let her have the key of her side-door."

"I certainly heard loud voices," said an imaginative guest.

"Yes, and a scream," added another, more imaginative.

Constance looked on those she had counted as friends; they turned their faces from her. She looked on Adolph; he showed a pained expression. She looked on her mistress, and the woman shot back the fires of relentless triumph. She looked on John Strain, the hard, but just, man. His brows had lowered, his lips were set. Merciful God, might it not be that in his unbelief of her would also be included an unbelief of Paul! She was condemned, rejected, most despitefully treated; and yet the thought of how far more pitiful was her lover's condition brought back her pride and strength with every pulsation of her loyal heart. Paul needed her; she would live, she would serve him. Paul needed her; she would put her trust in God. Without a word, without a glance, she passed through the part-

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ing guests. Only as she reached John Strain, standing apart, moody, sulky, brooding, she realized, for the first time, that she held in her hand, pressed to her bosom, her father's book. "You have been good to me," she whispered. "Please keep this until the days come when you will think better of me." And then she went out into the night.

Out into the night went Constance Sanderson, like distressed maiden of old, attended only by her virtue and her grace. With head erect, she looked up at the stars as serenely as they looked down upon her. She lived, she loved; and she was pure of heart. Why should she fear? Light would come after the darkness, kindness would succeed the triumph of malicious wish and jealous rage. Somewhere in that world where good people still dwelt there was a home for her, in which she might still work for Paul. Let her soul, therefore, be lifted up within her, for God reigned and His mercy endured forever!

From this state of exaltation Constance was recalled suddenly by a feeble voice crying for help. The road along which she had been walking was lonesome, with few houses and no persons in sight. She peered this way and that before she could locate the sound. Then she caught the glimmer of something shining on the adjacent bank, and quickly discovered there an old man, with long, flowing,

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white beard, his eyes shielded in front and at the side by black glasses. He explained, in a few words, that, though totally blind, he was able to go to and from the court, where he held the position of crier, if only some one placed him on a car that ran within a block of the County Building and of his home. Returning late, to-night, a mistake had been made; for, on alighting at what had seemed the proper distance to him, he had found none of the signs by which he determined locality. Therefore, for fear lest he might come to a worse pass, he had waited patiently for a helping hand. His name, he said, was Phineas Twigg, and he lived with his daughter Millicent, who would be glad indeed to thank Constance for her kindness to him.

"She might not be," Constance replied impulsively as she conducted the old man along the road, "if she knew what some people think of me."

"What some people think, my dear," Mr. Twigg asserted, "can make no possible difference to me; for I know that you are a good, true girl, full of trouble, no doubt, but free from guile or sin."

"You know?" repeated Constance, wonderingly.

"Yes, I know. There are compensations accorded the blind, which, in some ways at least, make up for their deprivations. For instance, my ear has become as vibrant to the truth as the stretched string is to the faintest current of air. I recognize

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its tones as I do the voice of a friend; and I never have been, I never can be, mistaken. Come, then, home with me, since for some reason your own home is so cold and distressful for you. Come home, if only to rest for a while. Millicent will welcome you; and when you feel that you know her and trust her, tell your troubles to her, in order that she and I may help you."

And, while Constance was finding so truly that good people still dwelt in the world, John Strain, in his library, was undergoing that revulsion of sentiment and predisposition which she had seemed to read in his very mien. There was never any half-way for his obduracy. A person, or a thing, was either all right, or all wrong. He tossed the book Constance had pressed upon him carelessly on a back shelf, as he paced up and down, thinking how close he had been to allowing her to beguile him into a mistaken mercy. Never, never, again would he hesitate. The law was a vast machine, set in motion for the safety of the people; and he who failed to carry out his allotted part without shadow of turning, failed in his sworn duty. Adolph, who was with him, attempted now and again, so it seemed, to assuage his righteous indignation; but, somehow, what he said was but adding fuel to fire.

"He may have done it in the heat of passion," the young lawyer pleaded as a last resort.

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"Nonsense, rot, utter drivel," roared John Strain, red-faced and truculent. "Adolph, your intentions may be all right, but I hope you will never try any of our cases in like fashion. Why, your logic, sir, is damnable. Do those who murder in the heat of passion arrange beforehand how to dispose of the bodies of their victims, as this villain must have done? No, no; I'll hear no more. As there's a God in heaven, I'll avenge the sordid, deliberate slaughtering of that little girl; as there's a God in heaven, I'll swing that execrable cousin of yours. So be it unto me, and more, if I fail!"

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CHAPTER XI

PAUL'S TRIAL

BUT John Strain, once engaged heart and soul in the preparation for Paul's conviction, found little of that stern joy which warriors feel in foemen worthy of their steel. The contrast between the strength of the prosecution and the weakness of the defence was too marked for that. On his side were the people, strong in the belief that the railway accident was the interposition of the hand of Avenging Justice, and fortifying their assurance of Paul's guilt with the old adage, "Murder will out." He had, too, all the wealth of the County, and the power of its police behind him. On the other side, Paul was friendless and poor. His relatives had repudiated him; and for this reason he had refused to accept the help they had coldly tendered. He was thus forced to entrust his case to a young lawyer, assigned by the Court, whose hands he made haste to tie by insisting that under no circumstances would he submit to medical examination, nor permit the question of his sanity to be raised.

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This young lawyer was soon sick of his task, and hopeless of any success; as appeared from a talk he had with the District Attorney, during a chance meeting a few days before the term set for trial.

"Hello, Chadwick," said Strain. "I hear you are going to move for an adjournment."

"I ought to, and it ought to be granted," replied the other. "But what can you do with a client who vetoes every sensible suggestion, and insists that there shall be no delays, no technical defences, but that all the facts shall be brought out as speedily as may be?"

"I know what I shall do to him," retorted Strain, with a grim shake of his head, longing for the vigorous resistance that would excite his powers of investigation, of logical arrangement, of denunciatory eloquence.

On the morning of the trial, as the two lawyers came together, while the Court was engaged in settling its calendar, Mr. Chadwick spoke earnestly to the District Attorney in an undertone. Strain shook his head, and smiled disdainfully; whereupon the other, with a resigned shrug of the shoulders, took his seat beside Constance Sanderson, who seemed the only friend of the man about to be tried for his life.

"I asked him whether he would accept a plea of guilty to a less degree," he whispered, "and you

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saw how he answered. Well, perhaps it's just as well, though I want to try every chance; for if he had agreed I don't believe I could persuade Breen to enter such a plea."

"Of course you couldn't," Constance replied indignantly. "Paul is not guilty."

"Let us admit it, but how can we show it? You can't make evidence out of nothing, Miss Sanderson. I never knew of such a desperate case. The only thing I can do is to throw doubt on the *corpus delicti*, and then try to induce the jury to believe that Breen is irresponsible."

"Paul is not insane," again protested Constance, with a little sob.

"Well, I nearly am," sighed Mr. Chadwick, as he started to take his place at the table in front of the bar.

The case was called. The indictment dragged its slow length of legal verbiage to an incomprehensible end of its terrible repetitions. Paul pleaded "Not guilty;" standing erect, with head tossed back, his wan face showing a flush, his eyes flashing fearlessly, for the instant transformed by the magic of conscious innocence from the dull, apathetic creature who had seemed too inert for passing pity. And Constance's heart leaped rapturously in her bosom with the hope that the change had come, only to resume its painful throbbing as he settled back

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in his chair, again the most unconcerned of spectators.

Then Strain opened the case, and an admirable statement it was, though a dry one. No eloquence was expended upon the demonstration of Paul's position and Paul's character; they were left to speak for themselves. The peculiar will was set forth and explained, and even the stupidest of the jurymen comprehended that this brooding, melancholy young man had found himself about to be thrust from a life of ease and luxury merely by the passing of the years that brought his sister to womanhood. Her existence meant poverty; her death would mean wealth. Paul's silent abstraction was interpreted as the germination of criminal impulse. His experiments were derided as pretences for delay, mere subterfuges to gain time, in which he himself had had no faith. It was alleged that he had been without even the remote chance of winning the contingent bequest; while the desires of his heart were so urgent that, even if he could have been assured of it at the age of forty, it would have seemed too late.

The lack of sympathy between brother and sister was skilfully exaggerated into an enmity, a hate that could not be quenched, a jealousy that was murderous, beginning in childhood, and possibly fostered by parental partiality. Then Edith's escapades were

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recounted, and it was asserted that the accused had relied upon them to explain her disappearance from home, if his crime should be successful. The District Attorney admitted with a show of fairness that all these were merely deductions, that might be minimized or explained away, had they not been illuminated by the murderous threats overheard by the prisoner's own relatives, and confirmed by the providential discovery of the body in the trunk. But the awful power that guides the destinies of earthly beings had said, "This shall not be." The unforeseen had happened; a puff of steam escapes, a train is delayed, another dashes upon it, and behold — a foul murder is revealed, and the blood of the slain cries from the ground for vengeance!

Strain described the crime in its terrible ingenuity. He showed how the young girl had been called to the upper room by adroitly devised lures addressed to her curiosity. He depicted the quick, deadly fall of the hammer upon the childish curly head bent over some object the brother had exhibited to his sister's wondering eyes. The scream, the downward plunge, the silence, the disposal of the body in the trunk, already prepared for its reception, the shipping of this ghastly freight to Paul himself, the accident that made all calculations futile — all were related with a straightforward simplicity that thrilled and horrified the court room.

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The witnesses confirmed all that the District Attorney had formulated. The body was identified as that of Edith Breen, though Mr. Chadwick strove manfully on cross-examination to raise the merciful doubt. Mrs. Breen's evidence began the direct proof of the murder. Her appearance, poor woman, so bowed under the burden of grief, horror and shame, and so unlike the placid comfort she had once embodied, was a striking commentary to her sincerity, as she told the story of the threats she had overheard Paul making to his sister, threats which he had afterward reiterated with such singular bitterness to herself.

Mr. Chadwick again cross-examined, not unskilfully, bringing out all of Edith's nomadic traits, her dislike of restraint, her rebellion under discipline, together with a full account of her flight from boarding-school, and her running away "toward the setting sun."

Mrs. Breen's eyes were averted from the prisoner as she testified; she was convinced of his guilt; she could not endure the sight of his face, blurred and blighted, as it seemed, by abominable wickedness. But, as she stepped from the stand and by his chair, she laid her hand shrinkingly on her nephew's shoulder. "Oh, Paul, how could you?" she sobbed.

Matilda Grafton, a servant at the Breens' home, identified the clothing and two long braids of hair,

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found in a dark corner of the attic, where Edith had thrust them. The station-agent recounted the interview when Paul had delivered the trunk to him, dilating upon the trembling, the confusion, the preoccupied air, so noticeable in his appearance. Mr. Breen told of Paul's demeanor when the body had been found, and repeated his startled inquiry about the trunk — a damning confession, it seemed now — his artful suggestion that Edith had run away again, and the cold-hearted indifference, unable even to feign a grief. And Paul bent forward as his uncle testified, with the manner of one hearing strange tidings to which he must give full credence through his respect for the bearer.

Then Adolph testified, reluctantly, yet firmly. His appearance on the stand was admirable, typifying the well-equipped, conscientious lawyer, cut off from the influences of natural affection by his deep sense of the obligations of his oath. He told of his interview with Paul, of the blood found upon the towel and of Paul's failure to account for it save by a self-evident lie at once exposed when the search for a wound on his head proved in vain. He told of Paul's admission that his experiments had been futile, and of his pretended inability to account for his actions. But, in this direct examination, he made no mention of the laudanum in Paul's attic-room. That, his trained judgment told him, would

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keep for the present; why should he appear to volunteer damaging information while Constance Sanderson's dark eyes were set so searchingly upon him?

An old lawyer is chary of cross-examining a brother practitioner, but Mr. Chadwick had all the rashness of inexperience. By repeated and reiterated questions he strove to fix in the minds of the jury a vivid impression of Paul's illogical and stupid behavior after the exposure of the crime — the ill-judged admissions, the lack of an attempted defence — all of which Adolph answered patiently but pityingly.

"Now, Mr. Breen," persisted the lawyer, "won't you summarize as well as you can for this jury just how your cousin appeared to you on the morning in question?"

"Why, he acted as if drugged."

"Drugged? How could he be drugged? Where did he have any access to drugs?"

"Why, of course, he had laudanum among his drugs in the laboratory. Hasn't that been brought out?"

"How do you know he had?"

"He told me so."

"Yes, but did he admit he used it himself?"

"He did. He said he used it."

"Do you mean to swear that he admitted he had

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taken laudanum that morning or within a short time?"

"I mean to swear to the exact truth. He said he didn't know; that he sometimes used it."

"And it was your impression that he was at that time under the influence of laudanum?"

"I am not an expert," Adolph replied stiffly. "He did not act like himself;" and Mr. Chadwick, fearful lest he had done more harm than good to his cause by bringing out this new evidence, motioned to the witness to leave the stand.

Mr. Chadwick's opening was brief, but to the point. He claimed that the identification of the charred and distorted remains as those of Edith Breen had been unsatisfactory and incomplete. He enlarged on the girl's wandering disposition, and ventured the prediction that at that very moment she was alive and well, careless of all the consequences of her mad conduct, and intent only on the joys of sight-seeing and freedom from proper restraint. He would be content, he asserted, to rest his case on this failure of proof of the first essential of murder, namely, the *corpus delicti*, but contrary to his advice, his client insisted on testifying. "Take the stand, Mr. Breen," he concluded. "I will not ask you questions, as you prefer to make your own statement."

"Your honor, and gentlemen of the jury," said

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Paul, in a clear voice, keeping his feet, and bearing himself much as he had when pleading to the indictment, "the witnesses against me have, with one exception, testified to the truth as far as I know it. The exception is the statement that I used opium, or admitted its use. I believe I stated to my cousin that I had a bottle of laudanum among my chemicals, but I did not say I used it. That may be a mistake of his memory, or I may have said something that misled him. I recall the visit to the station, as described by the agent, but, if I shipped a trunk, I do not know why I did so, or what it contained. Then, I returned to my home, but I cannot in any way account for myself until I found myself lying upon the floor of my room. My memory of any time that may have elapsed until I found myself there is completely gone. You must do justice as it seems right to you — but, while Edith Breen and I were not always to one another what a loving sister and brother should be, I did care enough for her to have given my life to protect hers, and God in heaven knows I have no knowledge how she came to her death."

There was a sigh and then silence in the courtroom, as Paul finished, but the good effect of his frankness did not last long.

"Let's see about all this," rasped John Strain's voice. "At the period, just prior to the disappear-

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ance, we will say, of your sister, were you worried about the future, and anxious to settle yourself for life?"

"Yes."

"This secret work, whatever it was, you were doing in your laboratory, did it give you any reasonable expectation that it might furnish you with an adequate livelihood?"

"I cannot say that it did."

"One other line of thought. You are a graduated doctor of medicine?"

"I am."

"I may assume, then, that you are familiar with the nature and properties of laudanum? Very well; what is laudanum?"

"It is the tincture of crude opium, largely used in medicine."

"A narcotic?"

"Yes."

"A nerve-quieter; at times even a nerve-stimulant?"

"Yes, in certain doses it might produce either of these effects."

"Then, under such conditions, it might either fortify the nerves for the commission of some crime, or calm them from the agitation resulting from its commission?"

"It might."

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"That will do," said John Strain; and, when Paul Breen resumed his seat by the long table in front of the bar, the dull shade again crept over his face. He rested his head on his hand, with half-closed eyes, indifferent that each tick of the great court-clock brought him nearer and nearer to doom.

But John Strain, when, at length, he rose to close for the prosecution, treated these two lines of thought, thus developed by cross-examination, with more consideration. Again and again he drove them home, until the motive for the deed and the false courage which had inspired or sustained it were manifest to the most sluggish mind. He explained discrepancies, reminding the jury that the defence was lacking only because "it had been ground to powder and burned to ashes in the crash and flame of the colliding trains." Then he warned them solemnly of the defendant's counsel's evident purpose to beguile them. "They dared not raise directly the issue of sanity," he thundered, "well knowing that our experts would laugh them out of court, but by innuendo, misdirection, and the appearance of the defendant himself, as he cowers gibbering before you, they hope for some forbearance on the ground of irresponsibility."

Paul suddenly interrupted. "I am not irresponsible," he declared sharply. "I absolutely refused

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to have my sanity questioned. I am sane, and in my right mind."

"Sane? yes," repeated the District Attorney, with a cruel smile; "legally sane, legally responsible for your evil doing. But not in your right mind. That mind of yours has been polluted by vile passions, and seared by the fires of cruel jealousy and deadly hatred. It was right in the bygone days when you sported with your baby-sister, proud to be her natural protector; but now it is wrong, irretrievably wrong, debased, diabolical, in that it could have conceived the shedding of her innocent blood. Gentlemen, that blood cries out to you for justice. Before its mute eloquence, oratory is abashed, and human talents are vain. The law exacts the penalty of a life for a life. Let your verdict be as sure, as inevitable as was that act of Providence which brought this hideous crime to light."

The judge in his charge did not bear so heavily upon the prisoner as the assembled Bar had expected. He dwelt somewhat technically on the subject of the *corpus delicti*, holding, indeed, that the proof had been sufficient, yet differentiating and making distinctions, in his desire to be fair, likely to befog the ordinary juror's mind. He pointed out, too, that the evidence was circumstantial only, and made so much of this that, had there been any reasonable explanation of the prisoner's lack of

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memory, there might have been a chance, in the opinion of the Bar, for a disagreement. As it was, they whispered to one another that "Chadwick had saved his client's neck."

This expert judgment was verified when the jury, after a brief absence, returned with a verdict of "guilty of murder in the second degree." There were a few buzzing formalities, and then, having waived any right of delay, Paul was sentenced to imprisonment in the state prison at Roscoe for the term of his natural life. When that sentence was recorded he ceased to be a man, and became a mere chattel of the law, entitled to restricted care, but deprived of his natural rights. Had he been married, his wife would have now been widowed; did he have property, it was now subject to administration. And yet, as he was led away, Constance Sanderson smiled tenderly after him, through her tears.

As John Strain gathered together his papers, there was a light tap, tap, on the floor, and the blind Crier, his cane in one hand, and feeling along the lawyer's table with the other, came to his side.

"The District Attorney?" he said inquiringly.

"I'm here, Phineas," John Strain answered.

"I want you to listen to me, sir. You know my belief?"

"Yes, I have heard of your notion about voices —"

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"It is not a notion, Mr. Strain," the old man insisted respectfully. "It is faith in an inspiration that comes from above in recompense for my loss of worldly light."

"Yes, I know," said John Strain absently.

"But listen," persisted Phineas impressively, his hand raised like an ancient prophet. "You have meant to do your duty, no doubt; and yet the law's ermine has been soiled, this day. Paul Breen knows nothing of his sister's death, and his cousin, Adolph, knows more of it than he has told."

John Strain's face flushed. "Come, come, you go too far," he said. "This is mere moonshine, and your brain is out of joint, old man. You don't want to lose your place, do you? Well, then, be more chary of speaking evil of reputable members of this Bar."

"I must speak the truth, Mr. District Attorney. Paul Breen is an innocent man, and his cousin is a liar and a perjurer."

John Strain turned away, and then came back impulsively. "I didn't mean to be severe on you, Phineas," he explained, almost apologetically. "We all have our superstitions and weaknesses, without the good excuse that exists in your case. Now that it's over, I don't mind admitting that there is something about Paul Breen that appeals strongly to me. I noticed it the first day I ever saw him;

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and after his arrest, why, his own lawyer couldn't have searched harder for an innocent solution of his conduct than I did. Even now, I can't help feeling glad that he escaped with less than his just deserts; though why I should give a thought to the bloodthirsty villain — who knows?"

"Good night, Mr. Strain," Phineas answered. "You will live to see him cleared."

Whether or no this incident had more than a passing effect on the District Attorney's mind, he appeared subdued and thoughtful on his homeward way. His wife greeted him at the door with open arms. "Oh, you convicted him, you convicted him," she cried joyously. "I knew you would, I knew you would. This is the proudest, happiest day of my life. What a great trial it was, and what a grand lawyer you are, my husband."

"Bah," replied John Strain, with a surly shrug of his shoulders; "I'm sick of the mention of it. The whole thing went by default. No credit in that, my dear; it was nothing more or less than what we lawyers call an inquest."

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CHAPTER XII

CIVILLY DEAD

On the day before that set for his removal to Roscoe prison, Constance Sanderson, with the old court-officer, came to bid Paul farewell. Phineas remained outside, and she entered the cell alone. Paul was sitting, quietly reading. She said nothing at first, simply holding out her hand.

"Why do you come, Constance?" he asked, rising, but with a distant air. "Do you not know that I am the same as dead?"

She smiled and still held out her hand, but made no reply. Paul hesitated, then took her hand in both his own, and his composure gave way. There was one pitiful sob, wrung from the agony of months. She stood close beside him, blessing and tranquillizing with the faith in her eyes.

Then she spoke: —

"Paul, let us be thankful that you are to have the opportunity to prove your innocence. I have no one in the world to care for but you. Until you are

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again free, I shall think of nothing but how to save you."

"How can you — how can any one believe me innocent? Who knows that I am innocent?" Paul broke out bitterly. "My God, if I must say it, I do not know it myself. I know nothing of the whole, awful happening. Perhaps in some horrible dream, some hypnotic, subsconscious frenzy, I did kill that poor child. Who can tell?"

"Hush, dear, you must not say such things," Constance warned, calmly and confidently. "I cannot argue learnedly about it, but I know that, whatever state you may have been in, you could not have done so cowardly and cruel a deed. The human soul is a mystery to us all; exterior agencies may bring vicious impulses to growth and fruition; but no fibre of your being ever conceived any harm to another, least of all to your little sister, and no such wicked purpose ever found lodgment within you. That is my faith; and you owe it to yourself, to me, to put aside the weak, unmanly doubts, bred by circumstances, these surroundings —"

"Ah, Constance, you are right, you are always right. I never had, it is true, a sense of guilt; I am assured, it is true, of my innocence; and I will keep the faith, I promise you. But facts are too much for me. The question is settled; I am condemned for life. Why, then, did you come? I

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hoped you wouldn't come. You must know what you have been to me. I hoped, one day, you would marry me; and now, and now — "

"I know, dear; I know. I hoped that you would ask me; and, now that you will not, I give you my promise that my life shall be yours, Paul. We shall belong to one another, here or hereafter; be sure of it. And I have faith that some time, in the future, in our future, you will be cleared, and will come to claim my promise. Until then, at least have hope."

"What can you do alone?" Paul exclaimed. Even her promise had hardly moved him. She seemed like a being from another world who could not remain with him, and with whom he could not go. It was all as real, it was all as unreal, as death.

"I am not alone," Constance answered; "nor am I the only believer in you. I have said nothing to you of my own troubles until now, but I hope you will be helped by thinking of others. I am no longer with the Strains — as you know — but you do not know that I was forced to leave them by the combined malice of Mrs. Strain and of Adolph. Paul, Adolph hates you. It may be partly jealousy; he certainly has some fancied attraction toward me, and is shrewd enough to have guessed that I cared only for you. There may be other reasons, too,

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which I can feel, but not fathom; but it is also because he knows you despise the objects of his dearest ambitions — I realized this the first time I saw you two together."

"I don't despise them; I care nothing for them."

"It is the same thing. He wishes to excel you, and it angers him that you care nothing for his success."

"Great God," Paul cried; "think of me now."

"I am talking of the past. We must understand everything, and most of all, Adolph. Paul, — I am afraid of him. Even now, I fear he will not cease his evil-wishing, his evil-plotting. But we are not alone; there are two others who will do everything to help me. I am living with Phineas Twigg, and his daughter Millicent; and they both are eager to aid in clearing up the mystery of your condemnation."

"What do they know? — how can they believe in me?" Paul asked hopelessly.

Constance explained the blind Crier's faith in his faculty of detecting truth of falsity of speech.

Paul sighed, but said nothing.

"Oh, yes, I know," she continued. "It seems a mere whim to you, and so it seemed to me at first, though he trusted me at once when I was in sore trouble, dear — "

"God bless him for that," cried Paul.

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"But I have learned to think differently since I have known his daughter. She is clever, acute, inclined to look at things with a sort of amused skepticism; and yet she has absolute faith in her father's powers. Paul, she is a wonderful girl. At first, I was afraid of her; she is so high-spirited and proud, so quick to resent, so strong in her indignation. But, oh, she has been so good to me! She has the loyalty of a man, joined to the tenderness of a woman; and it is these qualities that make her sympathies and her prejudices so hot and impulsive. She is devout, too, though without a speck of cant; and is as full of fun as if she was a most miserable sinner — there!"

Paul smiled faintly at this truly feminine definition; and Constance went on, vastly encouraged.

"Millicent says that her father never makes a mistake, in court or out, and that, if he believes in your innocence, that is stronger than a dozen stupid acquittals."

"But, my dear Constance, all this man claims is the power of detecting falsehood. Of course, I told no falsehood — but —"

"No buts, remember," she warned. "Your testimony is not the important matter, at all. Phineas Twigg says that one witness at your trial did not tell the truth."

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Paul raised his head, startled. "Who was it?" he demanded.

"Your cousin, Adolph," Constance answered. "Mr. Twigg says he is a perjurer, and that he did not tell all he knows —"

There came a rap, rap, as the day-jailor beat impatiently with his key without. Constance, white and trembling, leaned against the wall.

"Oh, my darling," cried Paul, himself again in the supreme consciousness of her grief. "Do not feel badly. I will do everything you wish — have faith in my innocence, have hope in our future. Forgive my selfish absorption; forgive my dull appreciation of your devotion. Oh, God, I am not what I am; but, whatever my state, spell-bound, stricken, oblivious of all save shadows, I love you, I worship you, my dear."

And yet, hardly had the girl's light steps died away along the corridor, before he resumed his reading, apprehensive, truly, of a burden of woe, yet so vaguely that it was an effort almost painful for him to concentrate his thoughts and determine just what had happened, and just why he should be so sad.

But his parting words, glance and manner, so natural to the real Paul, inspired Constance with fresh courage, and she took up the tangled threads of life, resolved to weave happiness for them both.

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Her first purpose was to settle upon some means of livelihood. While her father had left her a little property, it was insufficient for her support, unless she trenched upon the principal.

The most obvious resource was that which she had chosen soon after her father's death, teaching. She might have turned to this again, except for the advice of Millicent and Phineas Twigg. Their reasons for opposing it were found in Constance's declared determination to make Paul's justification the main motive of her life.

"You must be able to command your own time," said the old Crier, "for you can never tell when you may need to give an hour, a day, or even a week to some investigation connected with the case."

"You talk as if I were a detective," Constance objected.

"Detective?" Phineas repeated — "my dear child, detective-work is a trifle compared to what you have in hand. Here there is, so far as we know, nothing to detect, no crime around which are a thousand circumstantial details that may be investigated with skill and patience. Here we must find a blunder of justice where the world sees only its perfect work. You cannot afford to lose the slightest hint."

"Father is right," Millicent agreed; "you and I must be eyes for him, and it will not do for you to

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hamper yourself by selling your freedom or restricting your range. It will be much better for you to do some handiwork that will sell."

Accordingly, Constance toiled industriously and produced some of these wares, table-covers of Mexican drawn-work, a set of doyleys embroidered in filoselle, some handkerchiefs that were miracles of eye-destroying needlecraft; and then endeavored to find a market for them among the acquaintances she had made at Mrs. Strain's house. She returned from a round of calls completely discouraged and humiliated.

"Well, what luck?" Millicent asked, before she had noticed her friend's depression.

"It's hopeless," Constance said, restraining her tears with an effort.

"But the work is beautiful."

"No one would look at it. I sent up my card in a dozen houses, and in every case they refused to see me."

"The spiteful old cat!" Millicent exclaimed.

"You don't mean —"

"Of course, I mean that Mrs. Strain — I'd like to strain her — has told her version of your leaving to all her friends. Never mind, my dear; the acid will turn in some day and consume her. Meanwhile, you must go to the shops. You may not get quite so much, but you will know that every cent

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is fairly earned, and that you don't need to repay it a hundredfold in thanks."

"Do you really think I can make any money by selling things to dealers?"

"Just as surely, if they are the right things, as they can make more by selling them to customers. It is one of the successive steps of legitimate business; while amateur work never wins a market by itself, but always has a hand extended under its cloak."

"But suppose I don't come up to the professional standard?"

"Well," said Millicent coolly, "then you will have to learn, that's all. Everybody has to learn. Besides, why need you worry so much about money? We have enough to get along, and it costs no more for three than for two. You help me about the house, don't you? Don't be so silly, child."

Constance found by experience that Millicent's advice was sound. Before many months, she had established a reputation for excellence and promptness, and could count upon certain earnings for her day's work. This, in every way, was preferable to the chance income she might have gained for a while from the acquaintances she had made during her stay with Mrs. Strain. But the proof she had received of that woman's persistent malignity often troubled her, and she awaited with secret misgivings

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the time when that other enemy of her's and Paul's — that worse enemy, because more adroit, Adolph Breen — should again begin to exert his evil influence against them both.

But Adolph realized that there was a time for action and a time for inaction; and that each, in its way, was an essential element of success. As his triumph over Paul had only intensified his hatred of his cousin; so, too, his rebuff by Constance had made his ardor for the girl more impetuous and burning. But the hatred made no demands while Paul was immured in his living tomb; and the ardor, through its very virulence, warned him to wait for a favoring chance.

Besides, Adolph was absorbed in his service to his chief — an absorption most welcome under these circumstances. Some unusually flagrant piece of jobbery had come to light through the unsuccessful speculations of a political rascal. Needing money for margins, a certain official took more than could be concealed, the stock-market broke under him, and he fled. Investigation began, and, behold, an awful muddling of public accounts, an exodus of a covey of frightened office-holders, and a wild cry that the stable-door must be locked behind the stolen horses. The District Attorney, the fearless and incorruptible John Strain, loomed great amid the storm, hurling his thunderbolts of indictments

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wherever corruption was unearthed. Defiant of all influence, deaf to all cries for mercy, ignoring all pleadings for silence, the prosecuting officer of Oleida County came to be in many minds the very embodiment of reform, honesty and efficient public service.

When the storm ceased, and the groundswell of popular resentment was most powerful, behold John Strain floating on top of the waves, borne onward toward the Gubernatorial chair. Adolph forgot Paul, forgot Constance, forgot everything but the coming State convention, and the necessity of securing delegates.

The convention met, the speeches were made, the bands played. Adolph presented the name of John Strain, the choice of the honest voters, and amid a pandemonium of crazy delegates the nomination was made by a majority that was practically unanimous. Then came a campaign the result of which was a foregone conclusion. The great, sheeplike body of independent and intelligent voters tumbled over one another to rebuke corruption; and Strain was elected by a "tidal wave," Governor of the State.

Then Adolph began to consider how he might profit by his partner's diversion from law to politics.

To Constance and her friends this election was of importance for two reasons: — they believed Strain to be an honest man, and hoped, if it became feasible

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to ask for a pardon, that his familiarity with the case and his admitted probity would be favorable elements; secondly, Adolph's absorption in the campaign and election was a relief, since it kept him away from them.

Constance wrote to Paul every month, and longed to send him some news of progress in their efforts; but it was more than a year before she discovered the slightest item bearing upon the case. Then, one day, when she and Millicent were returning from the delivery of her work, through a street just off from the business section of the town, Constance caught sight in a pawnbroker's window of the little, silver-bound note-book Edith had given Soci'ty Dan. She herself had made a present of it to Paul, and she at once remembered the design, two sphinx-heads in the corners.

"Oh, Millicent," she exclaimed, pointing it out; "I gave that to Paul Breen. How did it ever come there? He would never have pawned it, I am sure. Why, it was my gift to him."

"Are you sure?" Millicent asked.

"I am sure of the design; but, unless I can examine it, I can't be sure that it was Paul's, though I know, yes, I know it was."

"But see," Millicent said suddenly, "it is among the unredeemed pledges. Let's go in and look at it. Probably it is for sale."

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They entered the shop, which was dark and densely filled with merchandise that exhaled a musty odor. For a moment, no one came to wait on them, and they coughed once or twice to attract attention. Then, a small boy dashed down a narrow flight of stairs, arrived with a jump, and inquired breathlessly: —

"Say — what can I do for youse?"

"We saw a purple note-book in the window with sphinxes' heads —" Constance began.

"Wid what?" the boy exclaimed, backing a step.

"With silver corners," Millicent corrected.

"Oh, sure," said the enlightened boy, diving into the window; "This it?"

Constance opened the book, and, recognizing Paul's handwriting, asked with an effort how much it was.

"Two and a quarter, mum," replied the sharp little boy.

They paid the money and hurried away, while the young salesman lugged out a big ledger and laboriously recorded the sale.

Hardly had he finished before Adolph Breen entered the shop. He walked briskly in and demanded: — "Where's the proprietor?"

"See me?" the boy replied. "I'm in charge just now. "I'm a good enough proprietor all right. What you want? — going to hock your watch?"

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"I come," Adolph explained with dignity, ignoring the question, "to see about the same business that brought those two ladies."

"Oh, about the note-book, the P. B. note-book, hey?"

"What do you mean by P. B.?" asked Adolph startled.

"Purple bindin', of course. Did you spout it? 'Cause, if you did, the time's up; and I'm thinkin', by the way the girl grabbed it, you won't git him again — you hear me. Why, she'd 'ev given a fiver for it!"

"I thought there was another week on it. Will you let me see the register?"

"Certain," agreed the boy, grunting as he hoisted the big book on the counter; "there she am."

Adolph read the entry at a glance. It was dated on the very day Edith had been killed; at an hour long after the freight-train had started. The book had been pledged in the name of Ed Flyaway, — the nickname Adolph himself had given the girl because of her wandering ways.

"That's right, ain't it — time's up?" the boy asked.

"Yes, it is all right," Adolph replied, mechanically. "Thank you."

He put a quarter on the counter, and turned to go out.

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"Hey, there," the boy called, "you're forgetting your lunch-money."

"I meant it for you; don't you want it?"

"This ain't no soup-kitchen."

Adolph picked up the coin and hurried away. He had recognized Constance from a distance, and had entered the pawn-shop in the hope of finding out something of her errand which he might turn to his own advantage. He was thoroughly frightened by the discovery that a note-book, evidently known to Constance, had been pawned the very day of Edith's death — when Paul was lying insensible in the attic-room, and his sister was being borne to her doom. Some one — some one knowing Edith's nickname in the family — had pawned the book in this assumed name. Who, then, could this some one have been? What was this mysterious book; and to whom had it belonged?

"I am a fool," he muttered. "While I have been helping John Strain, I have forgotten myself. I must see that book; I must find out what Constance and that prying friend of hers have been about. If I'm not careful, they will prove Paul innocent between them; and then, good-by to Neil Breen's fortune which now is my father's and any day may become mine, he is failing so rapidly from his recent stroke."

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CHAPTER XIII

PROFESSOR TANCREDI

THE next day, when Constance was at home, busy with her work, the bell rang, and presently Millicent brought a visiting-card to her. "Mr. Adolph Breen," she read; "Oh, Millicent, how could you admit him? You know that I will not see him or recognize him in any way."

"Nonsense," Millicent retorted briskly. "Of course, I admitted him; and, of course, you must see him. How else are you going to help Paul? Remember, you have one great advantage, which you have never used. You know that Adolph Breen is the traitor through whose perjury Paul was convicted. What does this imply? Necessarily, that, if Adolph Breen committed wilful perjury, he possesses knowledge which might vindicate Paul. There is no escaping that, is there? And yet, for a scruple, you have refrained from benefiting by the very strong attraction you exert on him. Make up with him, I say. Accept his explanations, whatever they may be. See him freely until he loses his cau-

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tion and shows his hand. Oh, I only wish he were devoted to me. I'd wind him around my little finger; I'd beguile his innermost secret from him; and then, but not until then, I would let him know how I despised, how I loathed him. It is woman's highest destiny, my dear, to crush the serpent's head."

"Yes," Constance replied slowly, "I have no right to neglect any possible opportunity — he wouldn't have come unless he was uneasy about something. I will try to meet him as if nothing had happened; but to-day, for the first, at least, Millicent, you must be with me. I am half stifled, unable to speak, at the very thought of being alone with that wretch."

"Oh, very well," Millicent agreed readily. "I will do the talking. Mr. Breen's first call will be a purely social one, then, and much good may it do him."

Millicent was as good as her word. She relieved Constance from the first embarrassment of the meeting by turning her batteries against Adolph the moment he was presented to her.

"I feel as if I must know you already," she said with a malicious little smile, "I have heard so much about you."

"From our too impulsive friend, Miss Sanderson, I fear," he replied with sustaining dignity, "who

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has misjudged the one whose only purpose was to serve her and the unfortunate man in whom she was so deeply interested."

Constance flushed with indignation. "If your will was no better than your method —" she began, when her friend again interposed.

"Oh, no, Mr. Breen, I wasn't referring to Constance at all," Millicent rejoined. "You are a famous, public man, you know, and, of course, you have your eulogists and your — your detractors. Look at your chief, Governor Strain, for example. He has trod both the strait and narrow path of virtue, and the broad road macadamized with the decalogue, from all accounts. 'Tis the penalty of greatness, or its twin, notoriety." And she rattled on in ceaseless small talk, engaging, flippant, about the recent campaign, until Adolph despaired of accomplishing the real purpose of his call.

However, his cool, keen nature always responded to an emergency. On leaving, as he took Constance's reluctant hand, he said gravely: —

"When you write to Paul, tell him that his cousin Adolph is anxious to befriend him."

"I won't promise," faltered poor Contsance, "I can hardly be —"

"When she writes, she will," cried Millicent eagerly, with an incredulous accent on the first word. But it was too late, and, as Adolph left, his in-

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scrutable eyes were lightened by a glimmer of triumph.

But the intelligence he had thus gleaned soon brought him mental disquiet. If Constance and Paul corresponded, then she could tell him about the discovery of the note-book, and he could advise her how significant was its pawning, and how best this new evidence should be used. Besides, his awakened passion whispered, how about himself; how could he hope to regain her favor if this sentimental, milk-and-water affection of hers for Paul was continually stimulated by letters to and fro. No, no; the thing must be stopped, and stopped for all time. Adolph, however, was not so simple or so rash as to entangle himself with the criminal law by interfering with the mails. He soon devised a plan which accomplished his purpose without exposing him to its legal consequence.

Governor Strain still retained the nominal headship of the firm of "Strain and Breen." As senior partner, he signed many papers which Adolph laid before him, and seldom even glanced at them. So Adolph prepared a letter to the warden of Roscoe prison, requesting that official to send all letters addressed by Paul Breen to Miss Constance Sanderson, and all letters directed to Paul Breen in a feminine hand, to the firm of Strain and Breen, and explained briefly that it was a "family matter,"—

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that the young girl was becoming too much interested in the condemned murderer, and the correspondence was harmful to both parties.

Then, selecting a moment when the Governor was rushed with business, Adolph placed the letter among a batch to be signed.

John Strain's signature was attached without a glance at the letter's contents, and Adolph took the first opportunity thereafter to present it in person at the prison. The warden was all complaisance. "Anything to oblige the Governor, of course, Mr. Breen. I know. A delicate matter, no doubt. Don't say a word. Letter-writing does play the devil in prison, for a fact. The Governor's authorization is more than sufficient. Besides, all convicts, on entering here, have to give us full discretion over their mail — a very necessary rule, sir, in view of all the plotting that's going on."

Adolph had acted just in time. The very first letter of Constance, thus delivered over to him, contained the story of the finding of the note-book. Adolph read this passage with the keenest curiosity and apprehension.

"I do not know," Constance wrote, "that I am doing wisely to bother you about a little happening that may mean nothing after all; but Mr. Twigg advises that I should take advantage of every trifle chance puts in my way in the hope that it may lead

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to unravelling the mystery of your case. A few days ago, while Millicent and I were passing a pawnbroker's, we saw among the things in the window the little note-book I gave you — the purple one with silver corners. We went in and bought it. Of course I know you never pawned it, and I am trying in vain to guess how it came into the man's hands. Did you ever have your pocket picked? — or had you lost the book? It seems to contain a lot of scientific notes — figures, letters and rough sketches of apparatus, of which I can make nothing. But Mr. Twigg says it may lead to some discoveries; and I hope, oh, I hope that it may possibly revive your memory. I shall await your answer before doing anything further about the matter, nor will I refer to it again unless you wish, for I wouldn't trouble you for the world."

Adolph congratulated himself upon his foresight in interrupting the correspondence. But the knowledge that the book had been Paul Breen's, and Constance's suggestion that it might stimulate his cousin's latent recollections gave him deep uneasiness.

"If they once find out that the book was pawned on the very day of the murder," he mused, "and, of all incomprehensible things, in Edith's family nickname, there will be trouble. Besides, let Paul get possession of it — those fragmentary notes may start a train of thoughts leading to an explosion

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that will blow me out of court and him out of prison. But matters are safe for the present. Paul, on not hearing from Constance, will conclude that she has become weary of him; and Constance, on not hearing from Paul, will think that he is provoked by her reference to the note-book. It takes time to work out any such misunderstanding, especially when letters can only be written once a month. Meanwhile, I think I shall take advantage of that Insurance Merger matter, and see how a change of scene will benefit my nerves."

The long strain of the campaign, and the worry over the problem of the note-book, had begun to tell on Adolph's iron constitution. With a smile of contempt for himself, he recognized that he had avoided seeing his partner since securing his signature to the warden's letter, and that he feared, actually he feared, that his treachery in the matter might either have been noticed or might in some way be detected. Such physical and mental weakness, so repugnant to his own concept, could not be endured; he, therefore, welcomed the important insurance business which called him from town for two or three months. Before leaving, however, he decided that a close watch should be kept on Constance.

Adolph's experience in the District Attorney's office had made him acquainted with many shady

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characters — both major and minor — and he now sent for one of them, named Richard Naylor, who, he knew, had prudential reasons for being true to him. This man called himself a " Private Detective Agency," but was merely a mercenary scamp, tolerated by the police because he was now and then useful as a go-between.

Adolph's instructions were terse and peremptory. " You will keep yourself informed," he said, " of the daily life of this young lady, Miss Constance Sanderson. So long as she busies herself with ordinary affairs, well and good. But if she shows some special interest, calls on the Governor, consults a lawyer, or goes out of town, for instance, advise me at once."

" I'll stick closer than a brother, and darker than her shadow," replied Naylor, with a side-glance and a cunning smirk; and Adolph went away, satisfied that he had left this little matter, if not in good, at least in competent hands.

Constance, not hearing from Paul at the usual time, wrote again. Another delay followed and, still hearing nothing, she grew very anxious. She wondered whether her letters had gone astray, whether Paul was sick, or whether there could be some mystery about the book which he did not wish to reveal to her. Phineas Twigg at first advised patience. He was well aware how prone even the

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most even tempered of men, under prison restraint, were to sudden bursts of passion; and he attributed the silence to resulting discipline. But when another month passed, and still no word came, he changed his opinion.

"It is out of the usual order of things," he said. "If there had been no interference with events, Paul would have answered by this time. Of course, we might write to the warden; but he is a busy official, with a very different view of matters we consider of vital importance —"

"Then what shall we do?" Constance asked.

"You and Millicent might go and see Paul. I could go for you, but he might not talk freely with me. This is one of the emergencies, my child, for which I advised you to keep yourself free."

"Yes, let us go," urged Millicent; "it will do Constance good. We can then come home by the way of Nadonk, and stay a day or so with Aunt Martha. I do so want Constance to know her."

In consequence of this family council, the young girls took a train the next morning to visit Roscoe prison, as was duly reported by the assiduous Naylor to Adolph, who had returned to town the day before owing to the critical illness of his father. The detective stated that Constance had a satchel with her, and Adolph's trained judgment at once surmised that in it was the silver-bound note-book.

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"I want that satchel, do you understand?" he said sharply. Naylor nodded and, an hour later, was following the two girls to Roscoe.

It was a bleak, rainy afternoon when Constance and Millicent arrived; so they took a cab and drove to the prison. There, they found it difficult to secure an audience with the warden. A clerk in the office told them he was very busy — "owing to an escape of two prisoners, one a murderer and the other an habitual criminal. What do you ladies want, anyway?"

"We want to see Paul Breen," replied Constance.

"Paul Breen?" cried the clerk, laughing. "Why, we all want to see him. He is one of the men we're after. He's skipped."

"Skipped?"

"Yes, run away; vamoosed; cut stick; gone; escaped. He and his pal knocked over two visitors, put on their togs, and were bowed out by the Head Squeeze himself."

"Paul escaped?" Constance exclaimed. "I can't believe it. He would never have done such a thing."

"'Tain't a question of would; it's a question of has, ladies. If you can find him, please return him, C. O. D. Good afternoon."

Constance and Millicent left the prison in silence, not knowing what to think. It was the last thing

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they would have thought likely. Constance was overwhelmed. Why should Paul attempt to escape? She had always pictured him as a patient martyr, awaiting deliverance; and now he was a jail-breaker, and the "pal" of an habitual criminal. She could not explain it. Millicent sought to console her.

"Come, Constance," she insisted valiantly, "you can't blame him. He was innocent, and he knew they had no right to keep him in prison. I say, good for him. I admire a manly man, one who can act; not a namby-pamby, passive nonentity. Besides, he wasn't in his normal condition when he was taken there, and it may well be that he is far worse. Why, the very sight of that dreadful place is enough to give one chronic dementia. Let us wait until we know more."

But Constance had lowered her veil, and made no reply.

At the station they had to wait about half an hour for their train. They took a seat upon a hard bench in the waiting-room. It was hours since they had eaten, and Millicent proposed that they should have a light supper; and, when Constance declared that she could not bear the thought of food, and showed by her manner that she would gladly be alone, went by herself good-naturedly for a cup of tea. Constance remained, absorbed in deep

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thought. She had hoped so much from the journey, and now her cares were redoubled. Though her faith in Paul was unimpaired, she realized what the effect of his flight must be upon public opinion. Then, too, there was the note-book in the satchel beside her, the newly discovered evidence which was to vindicate and restore; what use was it now? So she mused in deepest melancholy — when suddenly there was a scuffle behind her. She rose, and saw two men quarrelling.

The younger of them was a slim, handsome young fellow, of a dark complexion, bright-eyed, and with a military air. The other was a grizzled scamp, in a shabby Prince Albert coat, shoe-string necktie and dingy linen — Adolph's "private detective," Richard Naylor. Seeing Constance lost in reverie, he had reached over the back of the bench and gently lifted her satchel. Then the younger man, seeing the transaction, had descended upon him.

As Constance rose, the thief was forced back into the seat. Then the young man politely raised his hat, and explained.

"I saw this scoundrel reach over and help himself to your satchel," he said. "It is yours, isn't it, madam?"

"Yes, thank you," Constance replied. "I am so much obliged. I was thinking of something else."

"Do you wish to have him arrested?" the young

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man inquired. Whereupon the culprit made a frantic bolt for the door, but in an instant was seized by the shoulder and whirled back into his place apparently without an effort.

"Oh, no, indeed. Let him go. I don't want to make any trouble for the poor fellow."

At this moment Millicent returned, and Constance hastily related what had happened. The athletic young fellow again bowed politely.

"You are a manly man," said Millicent, with a droll glance toward Constance.

"I am a very proud one to have your commendation," he replied.

"But this person doesn't look like a common sneak thief," Millicent suggested, thoughtfully. "Let us find out who he is. Remember, Constance, what father said. We must be cautious."

Naylor seemed pleased by Millicent's compliment to his appearance. He fumbled in his pocket and produced a business-card. "You are quite right, young lady," he said. "I have made a mistake. I am, as you see, a private detective, and I took your friend here for a party I had been engaged to pipe. I regret my mistake exceedingly;" and he raised his napless hat with a grand air.

Millicent dropped the card disdainfully from the tips of her fingers. "Let him go, I say," she declared, "if only he will go at once." And Naylor

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made haste to avail himself of the permission, though he shot back a glance at the girl that made his ill-favored face venomous.

"I don't think he will annoy you further," said the young man, "but I suppose he is going south on the train with you, and I don't quite trust him. His business is against him, you know. So, if you don't mind, I shall keep my eye on him while on the train. Permit me to hand you my card, also."

The card read, "James Tancredi, Professor of Applied Therapeutics, Carteret College." Millicent placed it carefully in the bag at her belt, with a smile that seemed to say that circumstances altered cases. Then the girls thanked him for his offer of assistance, and they separated. But Professor Tancredi took the same car when the train arrived, and sat several seats back of them. Though he was soon convinced that the private detective was not aboard, he continued his respectful scrutiny, and, when they alighted at an intermediate station, where a ferry-boat would take them across the river to the branch road running to Nadonk, his gaze followed them with interest and admiration.

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CHAPTER XIV

IN A NEW WORLD

It was night, merciful night, that hides so much and has so much to hide, when Paul Breen had been brought to Roscoe prison. He was apathetic; for acute agony often works its own relief by provoking a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, in which the former wins. And so, he passed through the routine of admission an indifferent spectator of himself, rather than the principal actor in an unheroic tragedy of living death.

As if in a dream, he answered the required questions regarding himself and his previous state, and delivered over his valuables and clothing. As if in a dream, he listened to the well-meant assurances of the deputy.

"Say," that official said, "this isn't a prison, it's a regular Old Man's Home. Why, the only trouble we ever have here is raised by them who want to forfeit their good time; they're so sorry to be goin' out. And a gentleman like you — well, things will go as smooth as slidin' down a cellar-door. We'll

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let you rest up for a few days, and then find some soft snap for you, in the library, p'raps. It don't do to work a lifer, you know. Gittin' in the routine is the savin' grace; it will send time kitin' along so fast that, before you know you're cold from the winter, you begin to sweat from the summer. After all, you got off lucky, damme, if you didn't; and, in a few years, when people have begun to forget, your friends will pull the strings, and the first thing you know you will be pardoned — "

"Pardoned?" Paul repeated dully; "a man should be guilty in order to be pardoned."

"To be sure," the deputy assented indulgently. "That's just what they all say. I've been here now, keeper and deputy, above twenty year, and never onct have I met a guilty man. Now, then, you might come along with me."

As if in a dream, Paul followed through the carefully unlocked and relocked iron door into the dimly lighted hall, and along the narrow wooden gallery on the second tier of cells.

"You'll git fixed up in there after a little," said the deputy, as he again turned his key back and forth, with a dexterous shove between. "I give you my word, you've got the choice of the place. This is quality row, you know — nothin' under ten year, and only one of him. Hear that snorin' from B 33, next door? He was a slip of a lad when he

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came in, and he's got gray hair now. There's nothin' like it, I tell you."

As if in a dream, Paul stood against the grating the live-long night, his hands, above his head, grasping the bars in familiar posture, not noting the tobacco-stained, white-washed wall of the corridor opposite, or the flickering gas jet, cobweb-festooned, that kept out the dark but substituted only gloom; not hearing the heavy breathings, the groans, the restless pacings, the quarrels and struggles, the hideous curses, the more hideous laughter, which form the commonplace incidents of a prison night; not tasting the foul, acrid air — but seeing ever before him, as if in a beatific vision, the glorified face of Constance Sanderson, embodying love and trust.

Some time in the endless morning, after the men had marched out, Paul heard, amid the swish of brooms and mops and the drip of soapy water, a merry voice singing the old, vagabond refrain of "Laddy, faddy, whack fal laddy," and, almost against his will, he listened. It was the man cleaning the gallery who sang in such joyous recklessness as, down on hands and knees, he forced his way backward, plying the brush vigorously and pulling the pail after him. As he came to the outside of the grating, he sprang to his feet and stood, looking in, his bare and wet arms akimbo.

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"Are you the guy who kem in last night?" he asked.

"Yes," Paul answered; "I was brought to this place last night."

"How much did you git?"

"I was sentenced for the term of my natural life."

"Gee, but they soaked it to you. Then you don't want your old clothes, do you? Say, if you're anx'us to make aminds for your evil doin's by a bang-up good deed, jest give me an order on the deputy for them duds, will you? I'll be goin' out, afore long, in jest fifty-seven and a yap; and I wud like for onct to be able to teach the public not to trust to appearances, and be damned to 'em."

"What, fifty-seven days?"

"Nope, fifty-seven mont's."

"I'll think it over," said Paul, smiling faintly, "since there is no immediate hurry. By the way, my friend, what is your name?"

"Them that knows my qualificatuns best calls me Soci'ty Dan."

"Well, Soci'ty," Paul continued, "you see that all this is very strange to me. My head is still in a whirl, and yet, I do begin to feel that it is a man's part not to despair. So, if you will kindly help me with your practical advice to get along as easily and quietly as possible, I, on my side, will

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gladly do all I can for you; that is, if there is anything I can do."

"Annythin'," repeated Soci'ty, slapping his hands together in high excitement, "I shud radder say there wore. Not to mintion the clothes you've a'ready med over to me, nor the odd dough to your credit in the office, which I wudn't be avarse to drawin' on betimes, why there's the groceries you'll hev sent in, and your reglar prog, whin they puts you on 'orspital ratuns, as they're sure to do, and your plug of 'baccy each week, seein' as a swell like you don't chew, an' your cast-off shoes, and p'raps them braces whin they've gone busted. Annythin'? — why, there's everythin', and none too much, too, whin you reckon how I'll fetch you a bran'-new, swamp-grass mattress, and a rid and green sprid, and the unly springs in the jint, — sure the dago on Tier A croaked easy on 'em. And thin, there's the riggin' of your curting, and the mindin' of an old camp-chair I got off the last banker thet went out, and a razor I sneaked whin the barber was swabbin' out the tubs, and a bottle of ile for your lamp, and six extry chimleys. Above all, there's the expert advice thet orter command a fancy figger — the many ways there be of findun' the soft side of the hardest plank. Life here, sir, is like takin' castor ile; if you onct gulp her down and be done with it, you're ten times better off than

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if you backed and filled, and held your nose, and fell sick at your stommick, and yet had to take it, arter all. Keep busy, I say, and don't look back; and you'll be your own gran'fadder afore you knows it. Say, you wudn't mind coughin' up that silk swipe around your neck, wud you, as a sorter payment on account?"

This singular partnership worked well. Mercenary as Soci'ty undoubtedly was, with a perpetually itching palm, he yet had a crude sense of loyalty, even as he had an acute sense of possible advantage. These two feelings combined to make him an invaluable guide through the thickets and around the ambushes of that strange country to which Paul now owed allegiance. Besides, Soci'ty not only liked but sympathized with the new-comer, recognizing him, with keen convict judgment, as a different and superior type. No lot can be harder than that of him who dares stalk in borrowed plumes in prison. On the other hand, not in the most exclusive court of the world is true gentleness so quickly admitted and so thoroughly appreciated.

Paul, then, with a resolute heart, though still clouded brain, devoted himself to the present duty. He did get busy, and he refused to look back. The easy work in the library occupied him; but more, its monotony, day by day, lulled him like an opiate. He no longer found the mornings interminably

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long. The regular, unvarying stages of the day swept on like the revolutions of some vast machinery. Soon the weeks and even the months began to fall into the same rapid, unswerving advance, and, even as the deputy had predicted, the cold of winter was banished by the warm of summer before it had been felt.

He was not happy, and yet he was not acutely miserable. He still was stunned. There is something in the inevitableness of defeat that tranquillizes. When the struggle is over, then the vanquished may rest. Life's note was plaintive, attuned to tears; yet, in its reiteration, there was no tumult, no jar.

Once a month, as often as the regulations allowed, there came a letter from Constance, sweet, serene, a very part of herself. Without being hopeful, they encouraged; without promising, they assured. Why, then, should he despair? The cataclysm had passed; the ruin had been wrought. And yet he lived; and yet he was beloved.

And as Paul, in a way, became used to the prison, so did the prison become used to Paul. He was so faithful and unassuming in what he did that when the one, inevitable question to a new man, "What did ye git?" had been patiently answered until the fact that he was a "lifer" was a very part of his personality, he was accepted by keeper and kept

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alike as a feature of the institution. Convict curiosity is as limited as it is sharp. It constantly concerns itself with that which impinges upon personal interest — the fear that one man may have something that another has not, the envy of a shorter term, of powerful friends, of influence. Thus, the extent of a sentence is always eagerly sought; but the nature of the crime is a matter of indifference.

Besides, something is conceded to the supreme victim. The lifer is set apart, almost consecrated by his misfortune. No favor is begrudged him; since all possible favors could not make up for hope. Thus, Paul made his own place and held it; going his own way, almost exempt from discipline, within the narrow limits of duty which he never tried to exceed. His grating was always open during the day; he had the freedom of the hall until nine o'clock at night. His quiet, shadowy passage along a gallery, or the "flagging," with a basket of books on his arm, excited absolutely no notice from officers or men. They both alike had matters more interesting, more exciting, with which to concern themselves.

Then occurred a change — the fatal break that renders monotony futile. The first of the month came, the days of the month marched on and on, the first of the next month came, with its procession

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of days, derisive in its unswerving monotony, and yet there was no letter from Constance Sanderson. Paul sat in his cell, his face in his hands, the victim of prison-despair.

The grating swung back and forth, and a rough hand was laid on his shoulder. "Here, this won't do, not a little bit," said Soci'ty's husky voice; "there's jest wan t'ing left to do whin you begins mopin', and thet is to be measured for a rough box. I t'ought you was continted in knowin' thet nawthin' wuss cud happen you."

"Is it nothing," Paul asked, "to have the one faithful friend desert you?"

"We don't reckon it much here," replied Soci'ty imperturbably. "We ginerally calkilate about t'ree mont's for a sweetheart; six mont's for a wife, especially a young and good-lookin' wan; an' a full year for a mudder. That let's you out all around, don't it, sir? Hum, I t'ought so. Well, thin, the t'ing to do is to try to int'rest strangers in your sad case. They allus believe more than relatuns; they know less, you see. By the way, where were you tried; some'eres up the State, wasn't it?"

"At Hamlin," answered Paul, responding to the impetus of a direct question, though oblivious to what had been said.

The first glimmer of a surprising, an impossible,

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idea narrowed Soci'ty's eyes. "Queer, I didn't come acrost you in the pig," he reflected; "though they didn't give me breathin' time for that matter. Let me see. Who was it you scoffed? Your wife, wasn't it?"

"No; they said it was my sister."

"Oh, yes, you rapped her over the head, didn't you, whin you was bot' on the booze?"

"No, no;" and Paul wrung his hands. "A little girl, a dear, little girl, though I recollect I never did love her as I should. There was a railway accident, and her body was found in a trunk. They said I must have shipped it."

"In an old leather trunk, wit' brass knobs, you don't mean?"

"Yes, it was my trunk; I did not deny it."

"Thin, thin, be the Power of Gawd, I'm the lad to prove an alibi for you. She was far from dead, so she was, whin I sneaked her into the car, and settled her so cozy-like aginst that self-same old skate of a trunk thet she wint off, she did, into beautyus sleep. 'It's Paul's trunk,' says she, as pleased as if she hed jest found a pet kitten. Sind for the warden, sind for the old man, to onct, Mr. Breen. I'll swear to the trut' of it on a stack of Bibles as high as a church. If iver there was a case for exicutive climency, for full, unadulterated ristoratum and parding, yours is the wan."

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Bewildered and shaken by the return of hope, Paul sent for the warden, and told the story as related to him by Soci'ty. That high officer shook his head and looked annoyed.

"So you have got the fever, have you, Breen?" he said, — "and lost no time about it either. I know you think you have reason to be dissatisfied, of late. Well, reduce the man's statement to writing, if you like, and I will have it sworn to and forwarded to the Governor. But I warn you fairly not to expect much. Soci'ty is a notorious liar, besides being an habitual criminal. He is disqualified from testifying, in the first place, and no one would believe him if he could testify, in the second. I thought you had made up your mind to take your medicine like a man. But try it on, now that you've got it in your head; you will never rest easy until you do. They say this new reform Governor of ours gives personal attention to the smallest matter; but, on the other hand, he's a crackerjack of a lawyer, as you have reason to know, and up to all slick games. I'll send the writing materials to you, and much good may it do you."

So Paul drafted the statement carefully, and Soci'ty subscribed it with his mark, and attested it with his oath; taking occasion of his visit to the office for such purpose to strip the desk, at which he was permitted to sit during the difficult operation

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of affixing his sign-manual, of all the pens, pencils, rubber-bands and stamps that it contained.

Then followed an endless time of suspense. Monotony, routine, habit — all were powerless against the nervous expectancy that possessed Paul. He could not eat or sleep. He could not execute correctly the simplest duty. The men noted his absorption, and, tapping their foreheads significantly, said he was "going off his nut." Every fibre of his being was intent on the creak of the iron door leading into the office, which might herald the messenger of his release.

One evening, as Paul was standing, so watchful, so alert, at the grating of his cell, the creak of the iron door resounded. There were heavy foot-steps on the wooden corridor, and, darting ahead of them, came the tap, tap, from cell-wall to cell-wall, of convict telegraphy, announcing the approach of the old man, the warden. Slowly, almost majestically, surrounded by the aura of unlimited power, the great man strode along, with high hat on one side of his head, and big cigar out of the other side of his mouth, and long black coat flapping like a robe of state. He stopped in front of Paul's grating. "Here, Breen," he said, drawing a long, blue envelope from his pocket; "It's just what I expected;" and, with a shrug of his shoulders, he strode away again.

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Pale, gasping, yet hoping against hope, Paul tore the letter apart. It was written in the Governor's own hand, with that careful, almost painful particularity for which he was already celebrated. It set forth that the alleged facts submitted were not, considering their source, sufficient to justify any executive interference with the judgment of the Court. It was signed, "John Strain, Governor."

Then, all the wrongs, indignities, griefs, passions, broke their patient restraints and raged at will. John Strain, John Strain; that burly, red-faced man, so prejudiced, so unfair, so bitterly, so personally hostile. John Strain, John Strain; who had shaken his fist in his face, denouncing him as the vilest coward, the most diabolical murderer on earth. John Strain, John Strain; who had wrestled with the jury, as if for a prize, persuading, constraining, forcing them to an adverse verdict. John Strain, John Strain; the ambitious, the merciless; who now, in the plenitude of power, when he had gained all things he had hoped to gain through his rabid prosecution, was even more ambitious, more merciless, still. "May God everlastingly damn John Strain," prayed Paul; as he hurled himself back and forth against the narrow stone walls.

The hideous prison night wore away. Through the upper part of one of the high corridor windows a roseate ray of sunlight shot aslant. It drew nearer

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and nearer along the wooden gallery, not as the warden had strode, but as an angel might hover, until it shone full in Paul's face, a messenger from the beautiful world without. As if listening to a silent voice, Paul interpreted its meaning. Yes; there was beauty, there was life in the world without; why should he not have them? Was it reasonable, was it right, that he should remain in this awful place until he went mad and died by his own hands? No, no! They had taken home, position, property, character, from him. They had made his name a by-word and a hissing. Honor was gone, hope was gone, love, alas, had proved recreant; yet still he lived. He had youth, strength, education; why should he not pit them against the crude, brutish force of his taskmaster? Paul opened his arms to the morning light, as if he would embrace it. "I will," he vowed; "I will!"

Later in the day, when Soci'ty managed to slip in unobserved, eager for the news, Paul asked feverishly: — "Will you help me, Soci'ty, to escape? Will you go out with me into the world, far, far, away?"

"Will I?" responded Soci'ty easily, as if invited to some agreeable function. "Will I eat chicking, or drink rum, whin I gits the chanct? Oh, no; I guess not; unly with bot' feet. Why, there's everythin' to win, and nawthin' to lose in sech a deal.

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If we gits away there's no tellin' what a reg'lar gent like you, wit' hull bunches of friends to be touched, won't do for me; while, if I'm pinched, they kin unly bring me back to these famil'ar scenes of long ago. Try me, try me; as the fat said to the fryin'-pan."

"But how, when?" Paul demanded.

"Ssh!" Soci'ty hissed, with that peculiar convict signal of warning so universally used in prisons, as he drew over the curtain; "here comes the deputy, wit' a gang of visitors."

It was significant of the state of Paul's mind how quickly this incident turned it from the one subject upon which it had been concentrated. "The brutes," he muttered, "the low, curious brutes, who find pleasure in witnessing the mortification, the disgrace, the suffering of their fellows. If they only knew, Soci'ty, if they only knew the impulses they rouse as they gape through the shops, how rapidly they would seek a safer place. I don't blame the men, indeed, I don't, any more than I blame Shylock when he asked, 'Hath not a Jew eyes —'"

"Shylock?" Soci'ty interrupted, "an' who was he?"

"A character in 'The Merchant of Venice,' a Jew."

"Nope, you're wrong there; not on your life. I never heerd of a Jew bein' shy annythin'."

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"There they go," Paul raged on, unheeding; "smug and satisfied, dressed in their best, working a cheap public show to the uttermost. Damn them, damn them all, I say —"

"Ssh!" Soci'ty warned again, his eyes shining with sudden inspiration. "Don't queer our luck by draggin' down cusses on them. It's under kiver of some sech push as this thet we must work our way out."

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CHAPTER XV

THE MISSING PAIR

Soci'ty balanced himself precariously on the stool, his hands around his knees, which were drawn up nearly to his chin. "The fat keeper down in the bat'-hus was a-tellin' me," he said reflectively, "thet the State Boord of Charity wud make their annooal wisit nex' Toosda'. In the wuds of the poet, 'Thim's our puddin'.'" And he rocked back and forth like a Chinese idol.

"I wish you would explain what you mean," Paul replied anxiously.

"It's all as clear as a babby's ricord, whin onct you understand," Soci'ty continued. "You see there are doin's and no mistake whin the State Boord swings around. The aldermen and odder notor'us city offic'als attind thim; there's a blow-out in the office, wit' all kinds of jig-water for the inner man, and plinty of cold fodder to hold it down. Thin, the inspectun begins, and it's no wonder they're surprised by the number here, for most of 'em see double. In straight and solemn percessun they march t'roo the shops, thet is, as straight as

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they kin, and as solemn as they don't feel, keepin' togedder, wit' two privileged exceptuns. I hev' allus noticed a pair of old poppy-guys dodgin' around the galleries, and nosin' into cells, without iver askin' by your leave, and no wan a-sayin' of them, nay. I remimber a year ago they didn't jine the odders until the wery last of 'em was passin' t'roo the office-dure to disperse to their hum, and miditate on their good luck in bein' allowed to do so. Now, what they did thin, we kin do this year in their stid. Do you drop?"

"I think so," answered Paul uncertainly. "But who are they, and why is such latitude accorded to them?"

"Loungertude, I shud say," suggested Soci'ty with nice discrimination, "for they lounge around iverywhere, an' in a big cuccle. But I can't mostly tell what is their graft; somethin' in the false-pertinces line, I t'ink; they calls 'em a hard name —"

"Penologists?" Paul asked smilingly.

"Nope; thim fellers never do anny inspectun, they knows it all without. But it's somethin' arter thet style, beginnin' wit' a P, all right, all right —"

"Philanthropists?"

"You called the tun. Thim thet gives away nawthin' gratootus, excipt adwice."

"But how —"

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"How? Why, we'll inviggle 'em wan be wan into this cell; neck 'em, gag 'em, bind 'em, strip 'em; git into their clothes and onto their curves, and out we goes, kitun'. That's how."

"It's a desperate chance," Paul reflected.

"A man died of old age onct," retorted Soci'ty sagely, "while waitun' for a chanct thet wasn't des'prit."

"But their appearance; can we hope to simulate —"

"Wan is tall and slight, and the odder is short and stout, which fits us like a slop-shop. I'll rig up oakum whiskers arter their fash'un, and there's no trouble about sportun' their goggles, is there? Well, thin, all the rist is but a matter of front, like philant'ro'py itself, and be damned to it; and we kin stimelate as much as you like, whin we're under kiver, thet is, if we have the price."

"True," mused Paul, "we must have money; without it our confinement when free would be even more rigorous; we should be bound hand and foot. I hate to make the sacrifice; but I think, I want to think, that she would wish me to do so. Couldn't we do something with this, Soci'ty? It was my mother's. I have managed to keep it hid — even when most confused in mind, something seemed to tell me to do so." And he drew from his breast a ring.

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"Di'monds," cried Soci'ty, with bulging eyes, "Di'monds in a prison; oh, my Gawd! Well, I hev' heerd they're found sometimes in the mud. Say, since so much depinds on the ring, don't you t'ink I'd better take care of it for you?"

"Very well; you may act as Treasurer of our joint enterprise."

Soci'ty stretched out his hand avidly, and then drew it back with reluctance. Cupidity, cunning and shame mingled curiously on his face. "Trisurer," he repeated, "We've had Trisurers here and a plinty; but I cud double-discount the lot of 'em wit' me right duke tied behind me. At the front dure receivin', be the back dure leavin'; which is po'try, damned if it ain't, though quite unintinded. Nope; it won't do; we must start square at all ewents. Put it back — put it back quick;" and, with a gesture of sublime self-abnegation, he hurried away.

The succeeding days were shadowy and unreal to Paul Breen. He roused when Soci'ty came with reports of progress, only to lapse again into lethargy when he went. After his one fierce burst of rage against John Strain, something had seemed to snap within him; and now he smiled, as he recalled the passion, wondering dully that he had thought it worth while. He slept much of the time, traveling in his dreams over vast expanses of strange, desert

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country, alone, always alone. When he waked, a sense of this remoteness, this solitude, remained with him, rendering the past vague, and the present and future uninteresting. The contrast between him and Soci'ty was marked, the latter being almost wild with a nervous exultation, which found vent in a thousand extravagancies. To Soci'ty's simple convict-imagination, the escape would be the open gate to an Elysium of material joys. He refused to consider the possibility of dangers, privation and suffering. Paul, too, gave such a contingency no thought; but only because he was indifferent to it. He accepted in good faith Soci'ty's suggestions, determined to stand by him loyally; but the craving for liberty had departed as quickly as it had come. And so, this strangely mated pair awaited the execution of their plot, the one acquiescent, the other with an earnestness at once gay and ferocious.

At length Tuesday came, and the unexpected permeated the prison, from the brand-new clothing allotted for the day to the men most in view, to the superior quality of meat which the cooks were directed to stew in the surprised caldrons. Under the drastic directions of the deputy, the hallmen plied mop, broom and brush; and filth retreated to its corners, dismayed, but not vanquished. For one day, at least, the prison put its best foot forward,

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even though, before night, it would surely draw it back again.

The noon-hour came and went. The lines marched up to their dinner and back to the shops, with many a comment, low but deep, on the festivities so near and yet so far. The main hall was silent and deserted save for the fat keeper, stertorously dreaming the hours away in his great chair by the grating to the yard. On gallery B, Paul and Soci'ty crouched breathlessly behind the flimsy calico curtain of the cell — the paraphernalia of their plot spread out in readiness on the bunk.

The office-door creaked, and the cavernous hall resounded with ejaculation and laughter and the press of feet. The inspection had begun. The visitors gazed up to the dizzy, dusty heights of the topmost tier, and asked one another jestingly how they would like to be up there. Then the huddle, red-faced, vociferous, disorderly, surged through the grating out into the yard. The fat keeper saluted automatically; and then settled back to his reward of rest.

Silent again was the great hall, but no longer deserted. Two strange figures in loose black garments, their superabundant whiskers sticking out in all directions like tentacles of curiosity, had lingered behind. With broad, soft hats pulled down

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over their big, flaring spectacles, and note-books in hand, they sprang eagerly up the narrow, winding stairway. While the short and stout one paused to examine the lever at the end of the structure, whereby all the cells could be secured in one movement, the tall and thin one sauntered along the second gallery, peering into each cell through the bars, and setting down the pitiably sparse belongings like one making an inventory of the catacombs. He came to B 31, noting with gratified surprise that this grating was ajar. He pushed aside the flimsy calico curtain; he entered.

There was a strangulated, agonized gasp, as a handful of tobacco-dust struck the intruder full in the face. Strong hands forced even the strength to cough from his throat, while deft fingers, with the rapidity of a revolving shaft, stripped off his seemly raiment. In another moment, gagged and trussed, he was thrust into the narrow space, under the bunk, and wadded in with an old blanket, there to reflect that there were stranger things, in hell, at least, than were comprised in his poor philosophy.

Soci'ty donned the flaring spectacles, and pulled the broad, soft hat down over them; then, sticking out his whiskered chin from the grating, he solemnly waved a black glove to the short and stout man by the lever. The latter responded with alacrity, like one anticipating an intellectual feast. He pushed

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aside the flimsy calico curtain; he entered. And his anticipations were more than realized; for he met the fate of his predecessor.

"A repeater," reflected Soci'ty; "sure the fust good tun did deserve anodder."

And the fat keeper moved luxuriously in his great chair down on the flagging by the gateway to the yard; for already, in his dreams, had the long hours of duty expired, and again he was monarch of all he surveyed in the corner saloon, telling how things were done.

Paul had executed his part with the lifeless precision of a machine; but now, when nothing remained but to await the return of the visitors, he sat, a queer figure in the strange disguise, which somehow seemed to fit his mood. Again that sense of remoteness and solitude oppressed him; again, he was far away, amid endless expanses of desert, alone, hopelessly alone. He was so wrapped up in this visionary obsession that he was utterly unmindful of his companion, which was just as well for his peace of conscience.

For Soci'ty was not absorbed in the remote and visionary; the present duty, close at hand, was enough for him. Having emptied the contents of a fat wallet into various pockets, he crept behind Paul, and, with the deft, delicate fingers of an expert, filched another wallet, full as fat, from the

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long black coat in which the tall thin man had once been so discreetly clad. "Whin wan has been brung up on the milk of honesty," he mused, as he stowed away the deliciously crackling bills with the prudent judgment of a financier, "'tis jest as well to keep from him the strong drink of graft."

An hour passed. The weather, which had been cloudy, now settled into a heavy rain, driven by a bleak wind, and darkening the day. Less red-faced and vociferous, but more disordered, the huddle of visitors hurried up from the shops, their clothing and ardor alike dampened. They stamped along the flagging, by the fat keeper, dazedly saluting, and crowded through the creaking office-door, anxious to get home before what was bad should become worse. Only the two philanthropists preserved their normal dignity, and they leisurely brought up the rear, discussing learnedly the various phases of what they had seen. As they reached the front door, however, the short and stout one darted back, and snatched an ancient blue umbrella from the rack. "I should feel lost without it," he explained in a high, cracked voice, as dry as the crumbs of charity.

"A queer pair," said the warden, after he had bowed them out, and double-locked the door.

"Queer, but all there, just the samee," added the clerk. "Did you see the credentials they brought

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from our new Governor? He doesn't do a thing but take a whole lot of stock in them."

Meanwhile, the two philanthropists proceeded sedately down the street and around the corner until they were cut off from the view of the prison. "Now," said Soci'ty sharply, "hang on to my arm, and let's see how fast you kin scud along under a blue umbrelly. Act alive, man, for Gawd's sake, even if you can't look alive. In ten minutes we'll be safe;" and Paul clung to him instinctively, and yet with the aloofness of a somnambulist, as he darted through the side-streets, cleared of observers by the storm, and finally down an alley, leading to the river.

In less than an hour, Paul and Soci'ty stood on a wooden point on the other side of the river, watching the skiff which had carried them over disappear in the mist.

"Thet's what a little ready dough, jidic'usly applied, kin do," said Soci'ty.

"But where did you get it?" Paul asked, his faculties quickened by surprise. "I still have my ring."

"The leg-pullin' of thim old guys was so aisy," Soci'ty replied, "thet I might say it wore a legacy."

It is doubtful whether this explanation would have been satisfactory to Paul's nice sense of honor, changed and afflicted though he was by the mental

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shock of the explosion, the long strain of the trial, the agonizing suspense and the raging despair, resulting from his application for justice to the Governor, and now the exposure of storm and cold following upon the sensitiveness of close confinement. But, of a sudden, a series of shrill screams swept over the river on the heavy air. It was the prison-whistle sounding an alarm. Soci'ty shook his fist at the other side. "Oh, you have found two pigs in a poke, have yer!" he taunted; "well, thet's all you will find, glory be."

"They will follow, they will take us back to the stench, the filth, the horror of living," Paul moaned.

"There'll hev' to be manny a shuffle of a big deck of doubts and uncertainties," encouraged Soci'ty, "afore they draw this pair. Jest lean on my arm, old man, and amble along at yer own gait, as if out for a stroll in the woodland. This is a barren country, over here, remember, with a square mile or so of mountain and trees for ivery inhabitant. Now I know a bank where the wild times used to grow, more's the pity, an' manny of 'em I've had there; the fav'rit round-up in the spring for all the fly hoboes and lob-lolly road-boys, whin the chicking wud brile to a tun over the blazin' logs, and the can of mixed wud rewolve to unceasun story and chune. It's allus the way in this mortooal existence; the softer the snap, the sooner the heat

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of human passions milts it away. Wan night, Dutch Peter was stuck for fair — he tuk the dreenings out of his order — an', arter he was planted safe, wit' an impty kag for his bier, the boys give the old place the go-by. They say he walks, and mebbe he dooes; he was well used to the habit."

And, as they plodded on through the wet and mire, Soci'ty told more about the old freight-car, left in the heart of the wilderness years before, when an ill-considered project for the building of a railroad had been abandoned. Its existence, he said, was absolutely unknown to the few and scattered charcoal-burners who constituted the inhabitants of the region; while superstitious fear, with the flaming sword of imagination, kept the tramps away. There, it was his plan, they should lie for a few days, until the hue and cry had died away; and then, he would venture forth, first to buy suitable clothing, and then to pawn the diamond ring.

And Paul listened at first, stimulated by the agitation of flight, but gradually fatigue and disease combined to overthrow his consciousness. He no longer heard his companion's cheery voice; nor felt the support of his stout arm. Again he was traversing endless expanses of desert, alone, hopelessly alone. And when, at last, they reached their destination, and Soci'ty swinging open the rickety door, lifted him within, he fell on his face and lay

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silent, unknowing, sodden with wet, burning with fever, an object for tears and the tenderest ministrations.

Soci'ty did what he could. Presently a fire was blazing on a hearth of stone, under an old stovepipe. In the morning he made a circuit of many miles, and brought back quinine, food and drink. But the money was going rapidly; the vagabond instincts were tugging at his breast. Why should he delay with this dying man; was there any one on earth who would do as much for him? Through Paul's clothing he could fancy the blaze of the diamonds, and, in their light, he saw himself the centre of a riotous crew, scattering crisp bills with lavish hands, while the bottles cracked and the smoke hung thick and the girls crept close, with soft, warm arms and glittering eyes. Oh, it was heaven; the only heaven he could know or comprehend. He drew nearer, he even placed his hand within the sick man's breast —

Then Paul moved; then, for the first time in hours, he spoke.

"Constance, Constance," he moaned, extending his poor, swollen hands; "my dear one, my only one, come to me."

"Thet settles it," Soci'ty muttered, his throat swelling into knots; "I might crack a poor-box, or skin a hearse on a pinch, but he's beyond my limit.

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The poor, poor devil, under sintince for life, chased like a wild beast, wit' a reward out ag'inst him be this time, and yit, in his delirum, between the wery jaws of deat', a-dreamin' of his lovyer true. I've seen manny of thim croak an' in pityus shape too, but, arter all, it was the chanct thet they wint up against. But he — why, he is innocent. No front, no fake, no song-an'-dance for the chaplain; but truly-rural, so-help-me-Gawd innocent. It's too much, too much; sech a puffict gentleman, so clean, so neat, wit'out a scar or mark on him, and his nails in bang-up shape like a leddy's. An' he niver t'rew no bluffs, or give me the nasty, so he didn't; but allus a smile an' a wilcome, as if thet hole in the wall where he locked was a college room. 'Suttenly,' says he to me, 'you act as Trisurer.' Me act as Trisurer; oh, Lard!" And Soci'ty paced to and fro, snapping his fingers, and slapping his sides in his progressive exaltation of spirits.

"What's to do; what's to do?" he reflected, pausing abruptly, as if held by his thoughts; "he may die, or he may git well, 'tis the flip of a kine; but in eeder case he needs a friend, and he needs him bad. Him, do I say? Why, it's a her; didn't he jest call for Constance, and name her the unly wan. Thin, be the Fathers, I'll hunt her up at Hamlin and fetch her. She must be there; 'tis his home, at all ewents, where he's knowed. But who

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is there on the broad eart', who is there thet I kin trust, or thet'll trust me?"

As if in answer to his despairing cry, a recollection of the court-room, where he had pleaded guilty in Hamlin, flashed over Soci'ty's mind. He saw himself in the dock, waiting for the deputies to remove him to jail. A case was about to be called — all were busy, all intent on the affairs of life. He, alone, had been cast aside, a thing of no importance or even interest save that of idle curiosity. So he sat, apart, alone, when a gentle hand had been laid on his arm, and a sympathetic voice had said: — "I perceive, my friend, that you might be good, if you would only try not to be so bad." It was the blind old court-crier, with his white hair framing his face like an aureole.

"Thet's me man," Soci'ty now cried exultantly. "He'll treat me square; he'll niver give me away. I'll put the hull sitooatun up to him, blow me if I don't."

He brought water and food, and placed them where they might readily be seen and reached. Then, with some vague sense of doing reverence, he folded Paul's hands and straightened his limbs; and forth he went on his dangerous mission.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

PHINEAS TWIGG had alighted from the street-car and was feeling his familiar way homeward from the court. A cloud rested on his placid face, smoothed from lesser worries by one great life-sorrow; for the town was agog with the news of the escape. He feared the effect upon Constance and Millicent of such a shock; and was anxious to hear what they would do in this surprising complication of their plans.

The inevitableness of human fate, in contrast with the futility of human hopes, was oppressing his cheerfulness when his steps and meditation were alike arrested by a husky whisper, saying: —

"Might I have the honor of a wud wit' you, Mr. Twigg, on the strict Q. T.?"

The old man turned his sightless eyes with keen intelligence toward his accoster.

"Who are you?" he asked. "I have heard that voice before. Was it — I don't want to offend you, my friend — in the prisoner's dock?"

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"Offend nawthin'," Soci'ty replied, much gratified. "It was thet same, identical v'ice you heerd, a-trowin' of itself on the mussy of the Coort, not two year since. And 'twas you thet gev' me the good wud, jest after His 'Ahnor hed soaked me wit' the bad wan, so you did."

"Daniel Mattice, alias Soci'ty Dan," Mr. Twigg soliloquized in awed tones; "why, man, what are you thinking of to take such a risk? There's a proclamation out against you, with a price set on your head. To come to this place of all places, and to make yourself known to me, a sworn officer of the law — Oh, God bless my soul; how oblivious I am! You come, of course, from poor Paul. Hurry, behind that hedge, to the back door of my house, and I will let you in at once."

"An' you can't let me in too quick," rejoined Soci'ty.

When the story of the escape had been told in the front room, with curtains closely drawn, Phineas Twigg reflected deeply.

"Do you think he is going to die?" at length he asked.

"I'd be sendin' for the priest in the same case," Soci'ty answered.

"Then, God forbid that he should die friendless and alone. The girls are gone to spend a day or so with relations of ours at Nadonk, just across the

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river from the prison, you know. I'll telegraph them to await my coming in the morning. We'll get a horse and wagon and drive along the road, which, you say, runs not far distant from the deserted freight-car. You can meet us at the edge of the woods — "

" May the old plug you hire git there as suttenly," agreed Soci'ty, rising to go.

But this was not at all in accord with Phineas Twigg's ethics. With his own hands he brought food and drink, sweetening his charity, as he slipped a bill into the fugitive's pocket, with words of praise.

" P'raps, you're right," Soci'ty stammered, much embarrassed, with a comical twist of his shoulders, as he glided out into the night; " but I hev' no irritatun from pin-fedders as yit."

And, indeed, this possible growth of wings met with a sudden and fatal check. As Soci'ty slunk along the streets, at the rogue's own hour, all the old predatory instincts, in the seclusion and safety of the dark, revived within him. Again he was taking part in the incessant war waged by those that want against those that have. Every brightly lighted window seemed a beacon guiding him to treasure. Every moving shadow seemed the hateful evidence of a vigilant foe. He paused between the gate-posts of extensive grounds, surrounding a

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broad, old-fashioned mansion, beset and fascinated by a sudden temptation. He knew the place well. Had he not sped from it with hot foot on the morning of his latest arrest, after expressing his disapproval of the stern code of its mistress by throwing a stone through the plate-glass? Was it not the town house of that Governor John Strain who had set a price on his head? Every fibre of his being yearned for reprisal, that one form of justice, rude but poetical, which appeals to the criminal's imagination.

"Two kin play at thet game, thin," Soci'ty muttered doggedly. "Since he's so brash about settin' a price, we'll see how he likes payin' wan."

Soci'ty reconnoitred stealthily along the verandas. The parlors occupied one side of the house. On the other side there was a reception-room in front and a dining-room in the rear. In the former, an elderly lady, whom he recognized with a grimace as Mrs. Strain, was in earnest conversation with a young man. The dining-room was unoccupied, but lighted; and, through the half-open door of a strong closet on one side, he could catch the gleam of gold and silver ware.

What should he do? If he waited, a servant might come and lock the door. On the other hand, the pair in the front room were so intent on what they were discussing that either they might not

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hear any slight sound coming from the rear, shut off as it was by heavy curtains, or might disregard it as but an incident of housework. He was not prepared for any systematic siege; if anything was done, it must be done by sudden foray. Soci'ty slipped his knife-blade between the upper and lower sashes of one of the windows of the dining-room, and pushed back the bolt. He cautiously worked up the lower sash. "Fust, hear; and thin, strike," he philosophized, as he crept to the curtained doorway and listened.

"I hope you appreciate, Adolph," the woman was saying, in sharp, decisive tones, "the necessity of immediate action. If once Paul gains a secure hiding-place, from which he can communicate with that girl, the next step may be to prove his innocence — not so difficult a task, I sometimes think, as it pleases you to pretend. And then, happy in the love and the riches which should both be yours, he, she, will laugh in our faces — "

"I know, I know," the young man replied. "I have to be cautious on account of my relationship, but already, as the Governor's representative, I am in communication with Joe and Jake, the State detectives. They are at the office now. Early to-morrow, they will thoroughly beat the woods across the river from the prison. It is a safe conclusion that, with every road and railway point

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watched as they now are by the prison guards, there is where the fugitives must have secreted themselves."

"It is allus better," chuckled Soci'ty, "to wait until you gits to the ind of a matter, afore you arrives at a safe conclus'un. Meanwhile, none but the brave deserves the ware — the silver-ware." And he glided like a snake across the polished floor.

Once within the strong-room, Soci'ty's trained judgment made instant selection. He took a golden caudle-cup, long an heirloom in the Hazlett family, and a pair of massive silver candlesticks, curiously carved. "Betune thim, they's be a light to me lips, as the Good Book says," he quoted somewhat freely. Then, disregarding his former tactics, he made a swift break for the window.

The polished floor, which had facilitated his ingress, now proved his undoing. He slipped, he fell, he slid; nor did he regain control of his muscles until he was thoroughly twisted and entangled in the folds of the heavy curtains between the two rooms.

Then it was too late. Strong hands snatched his booty from him, and, pulling down the curtains, rolled him over and over, at the same time binding him with the silken cord until he was as swathed and helpless as a mummy.

"Let's see whom we have here," said Adolph,

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drawing the suffocating folds from his captive's face.

"Peek-a-boo!" cried the unabashed Soci'ty, popping up like a jack-in-the-box.

Mrs. Strain pressed forward and gazed into his face. "You are the wretch who broke my window," she said slowly, recollection and intuition combining to lead her to the truth; "what are you doing out of prison, where my husband told me you had been sent, he was sure, for a long term? Can it be — must it not be —" And she drew Adolph aside, debating something in excited whispers.

Adolph rolled Soci'ty over, with his face to the wall.

"You'll lie still," he advised, "if you know what's good for you."

"I wud be lying still, if I said I did know," Soci'ty retorted.

The gas was turned down, the door of the strong-room was locked and the key taken out; voices and footsteps died away, and all was still. For a time, for a discreet time, Soci'ty obeyed Adolph's parting injunction. Then, he began a series of writhings and twistings, with a use and saving of strength that betokened experience.

The result was unexpectedly successful. The stout, silken cord unloosed, as by invisible fingers; and Soci'ty scrambled to his feet, alone and free.

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Another moment, and he was speeding through the grounds like a belated spirit at cock-crow.

There was a sudden glare of light, vivid, instantaneous, throwing the fugitive into bold relief. Soci'ty stopped short, in the succeeding darkness, as if shot, his finger on his nose. "Some 'un flashed a glim on me, all right, all right," he reflected; "Some 'un is pipin' me for fair. What dooes it mean?"

A train of circumstances, each one small and unimportant by itself, thronged his acute and agile mind, combining into an inevitable deduction. The whispered talk about the necessity of re-taking Paul and the proximity of the State detectives; Mrs. Strain's recognition and her excited debate with Adolph; their strange withdrawal, and the stranger facility of his escape — yes, yes; there could be no doubt of it; they had let him go in order that, all unsuspecting, he might show the way to his companion's hiding-place!

"Do I do it?" murmured Soci'ty. "Not on yer life — I do thim;" indicating thereby a disinclination to fall into the plot, and a malign purpose against the well-being of the two State detectives.

The next morning, a two-seated wagon, drawn by a sedate and sober nag, was proceeding leisurely along the lonely road, across the river from Roscoe.

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Constance Sanderson was driving, while Phineas Twigg and Millicent sat on the seat behind. They might well have been taken for a family party out for a day's pleasure in the woodland, were it not for the undisguised anxiety that accompanied them. A man in an old duster and blue overalls, with the fringe of a straw hat drawn down over his face, stepped out from behind a tree. "If the cas'al observer wud take me for the hired man," he remarked, "I'll handle the ribbons."

Reassured as to the propriety of his appearance, Soci'ty assumed the reins, and at once began an account of his adventures.

"It was this way," he said. "As I perceeded down the street, all the wits in me nut kep' tuggin' at the roots of me hair in their struggle to wool out some feas'ble scheme. I was sure I was follered, for, whiniver I stopped, I cud hear the patter, patter, of steps behind on eeder side, and onct and agin there wud be the flash of the glim and a whistle back and fort'. But they held their distance, all right, bein' as clearly detarmined not to take me as they was not to lose me.

"I was clean rattled, so I was, whin I t'ought of youse waitun' here for me in the marn. For, if I kep' me app'intment, they wud be at me heels, and, if I didn't, Mr. Paul might die, not knowin' yer lovin' puppose. On the odder hand, too, if I med a

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break to onct and got away from thim, the chances were thet they wud foller their orig'nal plan, and be pipin' these woods. I hed no fear of their findun' the old freight-car, 'tis too well hid for the likes of thim, but they might come acrost youse afore I did, and make trouble from ricognizin' the giglamps and white lilacs of his nibs behind. It was up to me, thin, fust, to put thim on the wrong trail, and thin to git away in time to guide youse. But, as the Injun said, whin he fust hed the pleasure of meetin' his white brudder, 'How?'"

"It was very unselfish of you to think of us at all in such a terrible dilemma," exclaimed Constance warmly.

"I'd hev' been a shell-fish — a reg'lar clam — if I hedn't," Soci'ty protested. "Well, thin, to resume, as the bank-cashier said whin he began to pay out shinplasters arter hevin' soaked away all the kino. You must know, Miss, thet ivery callin' has its own partic'lar knack, and the gintle art of graftin' is no excipshun to the rule. What we old lags l'arn above all ilse is the vally of clus' observatun of ordinary t'ings; for you kin never tell whin some handy trifle may prove the wan t'ing needful to wuk out yer timporary salvatun. Suddintly, there kem to my mind the blessed recollectun of what I hed seen earlier in the day, in the cintre of a field, about two miles from town; — an illigant,

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full-sized scarecrow, in an old duster, blue overalls, and the ghost of a straw hat, thet in the height of the season must 'ev been a sign thet anny burd thet flew cud read to keep off the grass. But now its work was done, and it was enj'ying the rist of a good and fait'ful servant, plum on its face. 'Here's a chanct,' t'ought I, 'for a mix-up thet wud puzzle old Solimin hisself to figger out wuss than makin' two babbies outer wan. And I ducked into the nearest lightning-j'int to t'ink it over — over a bottle and a glass and a shiny, ile-clot' table-kiver.

"They was waitun' pat'ently whin I kem out, staggerin' as if what hed been but a frindly bout had landed on me sollar plictus. I cud hear thim whisperin' behind, as I rotated along like a buckin' ottermobile, and prisintly they kem up on eeder side.

"'Where ye bound for now, Jack?' says they.

"'To keep an app'intment with a pal in Muggleton,' says I, namin' a fly town a good bit from here, where manny's the crook been kep' under kiver till the clouds rolled by.

"'Likely enough,' reflicted wan.

"'But you'll be late if you don't hurry along,' suggested the odder.

"'Better late than niver,' says I, 'and niver it will be if I hev' the comp'ny of thim to whom distance linds enchantment if annythin' can.' And settin' down on the ground, I whipped a bottle from me

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clothes, and perceeded to keep me good spirits up by puttin' me bad spirits down.

"'There's no use of bodderin' wit' him now, Jake,' says wan; 'he must take his own course.'

"'Thet's right, Joe,' says the odder, as they moved away, 'he's got to be wuss afore he's better.'

"Well, you kin believe me, Miss, thet the course I tuk was a circoot'us wan, and no mistake; from wan side of the street to the odder, up stoops and down areys, settin' on fences and rollin' in gutters — it wud give thet tired feelin' to the Wanderin' Jew hisself. No wonder, thin, they lagged behind a little, especially as they cud keep tabs on me wit' the glim, to say nawthin' of the malod'jus strains thet I now and again sint up for the eddificatun of the stars. And so it happened, thet whin I kem to the holler in the field, where the scare-crow risted wit' his mart'ul robes still around him, I hed time to lay down on him and kiver him up afore the detectives reached me.

"'He's got to sleep it off,' says Joe.

"'While we camps out on the ground,' growled Jake, 'a-catchin' nawthin' excipt colds.' And off they wint, lukkin', as us'al wit' their kind, for a soft spot.

"I wasted no time, knowin' thet they'd rist for a bit, believin' me dead to the world; and in a jiffy I was in the scarecrow's clothes and it was in mine;

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and which wan looked the most like the odder I rally don't know, though I hev' me doubts. Thin, I braced the thing up on its hunkies, and placed the bottle to its lips as if it was jest a-goin' mollzeit; and off I crep' on hands and knees to where the detectives t'ought they was detectin'. Jest as I got behind thim, they flashed the glim into the holler.

"'He's at it agin, Joe!' groaned Jake.

"'I'd like to be at him, thin, wit' a stommick-pump,' Joe groaned back.

"And, thin, I stepped out lively, keepin' in the byways and hidges whin the light broke, and allus follerin' the line of least observatun, as laid down in the books for thim breakin' away. An' here I am, and here we are, t'anks to mussy." And Soci'ty, as he concluded, turned the horse into a clearing in the woods, well-screened by bushes, and hitched it to a sapling.

"This is the time whin the divil can't take the hindmost," he said apologetically, as he led the way along a winding path.

They stood without the old freight-car and listened. All was still — the silence which death shares with desolation and solitude. Which of these three now prevailed? They stole breathlessly through the rickety door and entered. The food which Soci'ty had prepared was scattered around; the water-bottles which he had filled were broken;

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the pallet of straw which he had arranged had been tossed to one side; and Paul was gone.

"They have caught him, they have taken him away," moaned Constance; "there has been an awful struggle."

"Nope," said Soci'ty, with a clearer reading of the signs; "the struggle was wit' hisself, poor feller. He has rushed out, Gawd unly knows where, in his delir'um."

"Then we must think and act quickly," Millicent advised. "The detectives have found out, long ago, their mistake in watching the scarecrow. Their only course is to come to these woods, as Adolph Breen directed in the first place. If they do, Paul may wander into their very arms; or, at best, they may find us and suspect that father —"

"No one will dare impugn my motives," Phineas interrupted, his face all aglow; "and if any one does, I don't care."

"Wait a bit, until I reconniter," said Soci'ty, slipping away before any one could object. Presently, he returned, his expression, for the once, grave and even dejected. "They're standin', the two of thim, Joe and Jake, down by the rig," he reported. "Now, listen; there's unly wan way, and I'm goin' to take it, niminy contradecanter. You wait here for a half-hour, and thin go home. I'll show meself to onct to the detectives; they'll

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foller me sure, and a merry chase I'll give thim. If I gits away eventooly, well and good; I'll hunt for Paul. If I don't, thin remimber that I can't be much wuss off than I allus hev' been. At least I'll keep thim from Paul. In anny ewent, don't you t'ree try to find him; two girls and a blind man kin unly help sech a case by not buttin' in excipt wit' their prayers. S'long to ye all; I'm off."

"Hurrah for you," cried Millicent, "I believe you can lead a dozen stupid detectives by the nose!"

"God bless and keep you, my son," said Phineas Twigg.

As the detectives stood, studying the possible meaning of the wagon hitched in the woods, their sharp eyes caught the skulking of a form among the trees. It was Soci'ty Dan, the man who had escaped them the night before, looking for marks on the bark and in the rocks, evidently on his way at last to the true hiding-place of his companion and their quarry, Paul Breen. They followed noiselessly, well-satisfied, from his intentness, that he had no suspicion of their proximity.

A merry chase, indeed, Soci'ty led them, through the endless stretches of the woodland toward the outlying mountains, every hour leaving the freight-car more hopelessly in the distance. With grim determination, however, they hung on to his trail, never suffering him to disappear from view, dodge

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"'TAKE US AT ONCE TO WHERE PAUL BREEN IS HID, AND WE'LL LET YOU GO.'"

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and double as he would. At length the approach of night, with its sure protection for him, its certain defeat for them, brought this strange duel to an end. Joe and Jake sprang forward, covering him with their revolvers.

"We've had enough of this," they declared. "We know you, damn you. You are Daniel Mattice, alias Soci'ty Dan, wanted for breaking prison. Take us at once to where Paul Breen is hid, and we'll let you go."

Soci'ty looked up stupidly. "Me no spik Inglis," he protested, with a mimicry of Italian gesticulation, amazing in its impudence.

"Then, curse you, we'll take you in."

"Take me in, hey?" cried Soci'ty, audacious, undaunted, in his own improper person, "well, how about yourselves? I've led you by the nose all day, jest as a darlint, which shall be nameless, said thet I wud; and ivery step has been furder and furder from Paul Breen. Take me in, hey; I'm used to thet. There's nawthin' in the cooler, an' a ball-an'-chain, an' bread-an'-water, but's an old story wit' me, soon told. So do your damndest, you can't do much; unly remimber while you're a-doin' of it thet youse was done brown and zwei-backed by Soci'ty Dan!"

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CHAPTER XVII

ON TO WASHINGTON

THERE is no one so consistently devout in the worship of his Maker as the self-made man. His success and his conceit are examples, respectively, of arithmetical and geometrical progression; and, until the one wavers and halts, the other continues its exultant flight.

If a little learning is a dangerous thing, limited learning is a more dangerous one. The ill effects of the former are generally outward and material, leading to blunders, mistakes, humiliations and losses. The worst effects of the latter are inward and spiritual, leading to dogmatism, impatience and contempt for the opinion of others. While a little learning often produces mortification, limited learning, if sufficient within its bounds, tends to complacency. The man who can do a class of things exceeding well, and yet who has not the humility taught by a contemplation of the infinite, comes to regard himself in a way as a god; and, like the Lord, when he rests from his labors and views the

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work of his hands, whatever it may be, pronounces it good without hesitation or reservation.

But power is an even more dangerous thing than such lack or sufficiency. It is the touch-stone of greatness; the nectar upon which divinity thrives, but whose fumes are likely to drive poor humanity first drunk and then mad. Discipline may fit the soul for it, but never pride and never self-assurance.

It follows from this brief homily that John Strain was nearing the crisis of his career. By his own efforts he had climbed high. Through patient, persistent, indefatigable toil he had grubbed and ground out preëminence in his profession. Through absolute faith in his own rectitude, not only of purpose, but of methods and results, he had inspired his fellow-men with a like confidence, and they had hastened to do him honor. Now, as Governor, he had power, broad power; power for good or evil, power for life or death. How would he exert it, and how would its exercise affect him? John Strain, at least, up to this time had no doubts or dreads for the one or the other.

Regarding, then, his motives and deeds as endowed with the sacredness of perfection, Governor Strain was both shocked and incensed by the news of the escape from prison. He had taken a personal interest in the visit of the two philanthropists to Roscoe, and had, indeed, requested them to give him

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the benefit of their investigations for certain reforms he had in mind. Something of the nature of lèse-majesté, it seemed to him, attached to the offence; it was more than an infraction or an affront, it was a blow aimed at the supremacy of law and order, and, so far as within him lay, he would avenge it. Within twenty-four hours, the State was placarded with notices of a reward of $10,000 for the capture of Paul Breen, and of $2,000 for the capture of his companion, Daniel Mattice, alias "Soci'ty Dan."

This action, so prompt, so lavish, did not, however, satisfy the Governor. Against his better judgment, against his determined will, he was constrained to realize that, like Saul, his mind was breathing forth threatenings and slaughter. An emotion, deeper, obscurer, more vitally personal than any sense of public wrong oppressed him. The face of Paul Breen kept recurring to him, tranquil, candid, unflinching, its gaze meeting his gaze like the crossing of hostile steel. Why was it that this convict would not go the forgotten way of other convicts? Strain had prosecuted him, convicted him, sent him to a living death, refused his prayer for pardon, and yet, here he was again, forcing himself, against impossible odds, into active opposition to the victor's will. He remembered his early sympathy in the case, succeeded by a hostility almost ferocious. He remembered how the petition for

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pardon had affected him when he had first read it, tugging at his heart, as it were, against the stern veto of his reason which had quickly followed. He had known that he was right in his refusal; and yet a feeling which he could not understand had prevented him from ever mentioning the matter to Adolph, who, indeed, had been away at the time; and had constrained him to put it out of his mind as far as it was possible.

Always, always, the personality of Paul had obtruded itself, changing the trained, unimpassioned professional judgment, of which he was so proud, back and forth between preference and prejudice. And now, even now, deceive himself as he might, it was the latent, silent, but indomitable defiance of Paul's escape which was the true cause of the extraordinary reward he had offered.

Why was this so? John Strain could not tell; but the need of justification shook and unsettled his whole mental structure. It was intolerable that he should feel as he did. Why, if he continued, he might lose that faith in himself which had enabled him to be all that he was. His action was proper; indeed, it was demanded by the highest and purest reasons of state. Not only would he force himself so to believe, but the whole country should believe so with him. With feverish haste, vastly different from his ordinary deliberateness, he added the fol-

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lowing statement to the formal proclamation of reward which the law required him to issue: —

"The Governor, in offering a larger reward for the apprehension of the escaped convict, Paul Breen, than has ever before been offered in the history of this State, is moved by a profound conviction of what the duty of the hour demands.

"This one, supreme duty is that Justice must prevail. Her sway is founded in the eternal verities of God. As we abide by it, so shall we abide in honor; as we depart from it, so shall we depart from the place we have won among the nations of the earth; for our very existence, the cause of our being, is a challenge to, and a denial of, privilege.

"As Justice knows no rancor, so she knows no pity. In her scales the offence and the penalty balance exactly; and there is no room, on one side or the other, for either vengeance or compassion.

"The good citizen can never fear, the bad citizen should ever fear, her edicts. They are upheld by reason; they are unaffected by the emotions. Through their impartial execution the Nation must live and move and have its being.

"The capture of this trembling wretch, seeking to hide his dishonored face from the sight of mankind, is nothing; but the vindication of the law is everything. If there is one exception, there may be many

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exceptions. When Justice varies one jot or tittle, then Injustice rules arbitrarily and despotically in her stead.

"Natural endowments, kindly and attractive graces, station, riches, influence and power, when pleaded in abatement, only emphasize the necessity of no discrimination. Our security and salvation as a people demand that, equally, exactly and inevitably, every man, whoever he may be, rich or poor, high or low, shall reap as he has sown, until full and complete requital before the law is made."

These ringing phrases soothed John Strain's unwonted perturbation. He yielded to the fascination of the written word. Again, he was as great as he would be great; again, his motives were as pure as his deeds were impeccable. The vision of Paul Breen faded from his memory, and in its place, if the thought of the man recurred at all, was the skulking convict, an impersonal type. His doubts and dreads had been but a momentary weakness — that sign of mortality which now and again comes to all men of exalted purpose and high responsibilities to warn them that they, too, are dust.

And, that evening, when John Strain returned from the Capital to his home at Hamlin, his assurance was still further reassured. Not since the days of their courtship had Abigail Alice been so affable and cordial. For years, she had acted the consistent

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part of an extremely captious conscience, never praising, always finding fault, although her voice was neither small nor still. Now, this same voice was lifted up in thanksgiving for the marital privilege which was hers.

The change was gratifying to John Strain, as his marriage had always been a rather sore point with him. Granted that through it, primarily, he had gained a start, still, men are apt to kick aside disdainfully the stool by which they climb, — especially if it has become a stool of repentance. Besides, his idea of a wife was the old-fashioned one of a vine entwining around a sturdy oak; and not even an abnormal development of that imagination which he lacked could picture Abigail Alice in so dependent and trustful a rôle.

But now, as he sat in the easiest chair, in the coziest corner, and listened to all the good things she declared the neighbors were saying of him, the Governor was inclined to admit, to his innermost self, of course, and in strict confidence, that there might be less sensible women than his wife after all. This conclusion, however, was consigned to the limbo of the undemonstrated, when Mrs. Strain, with an eagerness undisguised and no longer to be restrained, cried: —

"Oh, John, you do think, don't you, that they will catch that Paul Breen?"

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"Ah, that is it, is it?" Strain said, with an air of enlightenment.

The woman flushed a little and bit her lip. "I don't know what you mean," she protested, "but I do know that the finest thing you ever did or ever can do, if you live a thousand years, was to offer that immense reward for him."

"Why?"

"Why, because he is a murdering villain who ought to be hanged if he got his deserts, that's why."

"Why are you always so hot against him, Abigail?" asked John, genuinely interested; "he never injured or insulted you in any way, did he?"

"I rather think not!"

"He used to be around our house a good deal at one time — didn't he always bear himself as a quiet, gentlemanly, young fellow?"

"I suppose so."

"Considerate, highly intelligent —"

"Yes, yes —"

"With an attractive face, an engaging manner —"

"I hate him, I hate him," stormed Abigail Alice. "I hate his manner, his considerateness, his intelligence, his face and personality most of all! I do, I do; though I don't know why, any more than I know why I am I, and you are you. There are some things that come to a woman that can't be reasoned

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out or put into words, and yet they may be the only real things in her life. But let me ask you, since questions are in order, what do you mean by defending him to my face — you, who swore you would swing him — you know you did; you, who relentlessly drove him into prison, and have kept him there, refusing even to hear his protestations of innocence; you, who have set a fortune on his head, enough to draw out the nation in pursuit of him as if after some wild beast — what do you mean by that, I say? Oh, you needn't attempt to answer, I know, I know! It's mere contrariness — it is to tantalize and exasperate a poor, weak, despised, forsaken woman, in whose place you'd like to put some such hussy as Constance Sanderson, but you sha'n't, — I'll live to thwart you! It is but a part of all I have had to endure for years and years, you, you, — " But here passion grew incoherent and then speechless, and Mrs. Strain tore from the room in a hysterical torrent of tears.

And Governor John Strain sat long, that night, in his stuffed chair and by his bright fire, unappreciative of their comfort, lost in thought. In no degree was he thus anxiously, almost timorously, pondering over his wife's outburst; that was a forgotten trifle, like the empty wrath of a storm that had beat in vain against his house, as many another storm in the past had vainly beat. No, no; it was

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her question, with its insistent, persistent, eternal why, that oppressed him. Why had he defended Paul Breen to her? It had been done impulsively, so much he realized; but all the worse for that. Was he a man to lose his fixed judgment in impulse? Whence, then, had come this impulse? Had he an intuition in Paul's favor, even as his wife had one in his despite? The Governor shook his head in despair of the problem, and, as he crept into bed to a sleep as uneasy as it had always been sound and serene, he shivered as if the unknown had touched him.

But, with the clarity and reality of morning, the strong man was himself again; shrugging his shoulders shamedly instead of shivering, and then putting the subject resolutely from his mind. He was still on the upward and onward way, of that he was assured. It was in the very air; it permeated the looks and talk of his neighbors. As he strode down the street to the station, the embodiment of intelligent force, his progress was triumphal. Men of all parties, even bitter political opponents, stopped to express their appreciation of the timeliness and weight of his proclamation. He had struck a popular chord, beyond peradventure. As an old farmer, whip in hand, remarked to the approving bystanders: —

"That's the stuff the fathers preached and prac-

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tised; and that's the stuff upon which we must rely in these evil days of boodle and high-handed dealings."

At the Capital the unanimity and heartiness of praise was even more marked. Both the morning papers, recognized respectively as the mouth-pieces of the two great political parties of the State, united in pronouncing the proclamation a most significant and far-reaching public utterance. When the metropolitan papers arrived, this judgment gained dignity from the concurrence of their leading editorials; and so, before night, throughout this town, where every one was a politician by birth, and many a one was a statesman by inheritance, the conviction prevailed that Governor Strain was a man of destiny.

Nor was this renown either local or transitory. It so happened that during the last year the moral sense of the country had been shocked by the exposure of corruption in high places — corruption, not timorous or faint-hearted, but bold, defiant, returning the old challenge of "What are you going to do about it?" to shameful accusation. In the great cities there had been peculations, briberies, the sale of public offices, the waste of public utilities; and yet the administration of the law had failed adequately to correct or restrain. Indictments had been found, only to be pigeonholed or

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quashed; packed juries had acquitted without leaving their seats; those who were put in had proved even worse than those who were put out; and many a thoughtful, patriotic mind was overshadowed by despair for the Republic.

John Strain's proclamation, then, had all the solemnity of an evangel. As an obscure paper, in a little town far down on the Gulf expressed it, it was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" The striking metaphor enkindled the popular imagination, sweeping up to the north, and then westward-ho, reiterated and reflected by a thousand presses like the wavings of the Scottish fiery cross. The hour for national reform had come; behold the man!

Civic and ethical clubs, far and near, felt the magnetic, emotional currents, hot with resentment and indignation, perfervid for change, that were thrilling similarly through a thousand, thousand hearts. Their members wore badges, emblazoned "Strain and Justice," and in lecture-rooms and on the hustings the Governor's pregnant phrases were repeated and lauded until they became the mightiest of the classic household words.

The man of homely virtue is the man of strength in a democracy, for he represents the ideal of the lowliest. His career gives poesy to prosaic toil, and

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lightens with hope the dull road of routine. A myriad pens depicted John Strain from every point of view; they told of the struggles of his youth, the tireless labors, the difficulties, the triumphs of his stalwart manhood. They put words in his mouth and actions in his hand, not real, perhaps, but apt. And out from this composite picture he shone attractive, in simple lines; the exemplary citizen, the stern patriot, the type of the old Roman, hard as oak, but equal to every emergency, and sound to the core — the man of the people, in fine, who knew and did the right, and feared not.

The Presidential election was barely six months distant; and the party to which John Strain belonged was still wallowing in a hopeless minority, without candidate or issue. A conference of its most prominent leaders was held in New Chester, and it saw a sudden light. The next day, Adolph Breen entered the executive chamber, where his partner was doggedly plodding his way through a mass of routine matters. "Mr. President," he said, with extended hand, "allow me to congratulate you."

"What do you mean?" Strain asked with an assumption of surprise, though there was a masterful light in his eyes, and his ruddy cheeks had paled a little.

"It is all over except the shouting," Adolph con-

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tinued. "Carrington is for you; Rhodes is for you; the whole Committee are in a tumble to get on the band-wagon. You will be nominated sure by acclamation; and Strain and Justice will sweep the country."

"Nonsense, the boom is too emotional to last; the flurry will be over before the convention meets."

"The convention will execute the will of its masters — have no fear of that; it has all been provided for down to the smallest detail. Why, man, you are our political Moses, the only one who can lead us from utter bondage into abounding milk and honey; you don't think we are going to lose you, do you? There may be something in what you say, though, about the flurry. I haven't half your confidence in the popular will — there's nothing more variable to my mind — that is, nothing masculine. But enthusiasm can be rekindled, and may then burn all the brighter; and if only that event does happen which I believe will happen at the psychological moment, the wheels will need no greasing —"

"And that is?"

"Paul's arrest on the eve of the convention."

But John Strain strode up and down the room, his brows contracted, snapping his great fingers like Chinese crackers. "It is a great, a glorious opportunity," he muttered, "the opportunity of a life-

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time. To be President of these United States, the representative, the ruler, of eighty millions of people; what a fulfillment, what a rounding-out of an honorable ambition, a noble career. And I felt it, I felt it coming all the while."

Then he stopped abruptly, towering over Adolph with flaming face and swelling throat. "Oh, I know you politicians," he stormed; "you can't fool me. You always want the full credit; you never concede an inch to personal merit or strength. And don't you be fooled either, my boy, by what I just said about the boom giving out; it was but in the spirit of *nolo episcopari*, and not to be taken seriously. The boom's all right, never fear. So tell your friends that, if they will do their part, I'll keep my end up. Why, I'll sweep the country like wildfire. You never knew John Strain to fail, did you, in anything on which he set his mind? No, and you never will. What do I care for Carrington and Rhodes and all that crew? I believe in the people and they believe in me, and together we make a team that can't be beaten. No clique can run me; I'm needed, I tell you; needed to restore the old order of things, the reign of equity, of righteousness, yes, of Strain and Justice. That's why I'll be nominated; that's why I'll accept; that's why I'll be elected, as I will be, by the Eternal!"

"And Paul?" Adolph asked submissively, af-

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fected as he always was by the cumulating force and weight of his partner's ardor.

"Paul, Paul Breen? Oh, what's the use of talking about him? Likely enough he will be arrested at just the right time; but it will be in the natural course of events, one thing out of many working together for the common good. You don't suppose, for one moment, do you, that such a miserable creature could have any real influence, one way or the other, on the destiny of a man like me? No, no; that rests here!"

And the Governor slapped his broad chest with the arrogance of a conqueror.

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CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE HANDS OF THE EXPERT

THE young professor, James Tancredi, had been from boyhood the slave of his own good-nature. He had accepted without protest the guidance of all who took the trouble to influence him, and this was the result rather of strength than of weakness. A weaker man, whether lacking in brain, body or moral fibre, would have found himself annoyed or oppressed by the tasks or responsibilities thrust upon him, and, merely through seeking ease, would have resented control. Tancredi, easily capable of more than had ever been required or requested, had found pleasure in exerting his abilities in whatever field they were called to action. As a boy, schooldays seemed never burdensome to him. The tasks set before him were readily performed, and the social side of school-life brought him delight. Brilliant in the class-room, he was no less distinguished in athletics, for which his light, sinewy figure especially adapted him. Reaching, without great effort, distinction in boyish studies and sports, he remained

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modest because all he accomplished seemed to him simple, and, being modest and talented, he was popular.

The same qualities won him similar success in college-life, and he had entered upon his professional studies without misgiving and also without thought of leaving the beaten path that had always been so pleasant to his feet. His father, who had died a year before Tancredi's graduation, had been a physician of local eminence, and had wished his son to continue the honor of the name in medical annals. Had Tancredi disregarded this wish, and followed some other pursuit, there might have come disillusion and a revolt that would have strengthened and developed his character. But here again, his good-natured compliance seemed to open the way before him. Some notable successes in the first years of practice, together with the prestige of his father's name, led to the request that he would join the faculty of the medical school connected with Carteret College; and he had accepted the invitation because it was still along the line of least resistance.

Tancredi's duties, as a member of the faculty, were not so absorbing as to require all his time or efforts, and he had written several carefully considered papers for medical journals — one upon "Atavistic Heredity in Disease," and one upon "Intra-

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capsular Fractures of the Femora" had been especially successful — and had also published "Vibratory Therapeutics," the book Paul Breen had found so inspiring. But he was, unknown to himself, unawakened. He was living without strong motive or purpose, and consequently taking life rather frivolously, as a passive rather than an active factor.

He had never shirked responsibility, but neither had he sought the work or the place where he could do his best for others and consequently for himself. From this relative *dolce far niente* he might never have been roused had it not been for his meeting with Constance and Millicent in the station.

Millicent had impressed him strongly, and this attraction, which might have been passing, was strengthened by a second accidental meeting, a few days later, when he had gone to New Chester on legislative business, and she happened to be there on a shopping expedition. The romantic agent that brought about a continuation of the acquaintance was a trolley-car — a *deus ex machina* up to date.

Millicent, who had her proper share of feminine traits, alighted while facing the wrong way. Before she was clear the car started. The laws of nature, being entirely unchivalrous, treated her without the slightest consideration; she was thrown down, and became faint from the shock. The car was stopped instantly, and, in response to an inquiry for a doc-

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tor, Tancredi, absorbed in his paper at the further end, came forward to give what assistance he might.

Fortunately, the injury was not very serious. After a little, Millicent recovered her senses and rose to her feet. She recognized Tancredi, and thanked him with a smile, surprised, questioning, bewitching, in its mute raillery. The conductor, seeing that there was nothing further to be done, and after Millicent had assured him that she had no complaint to make, rang his bell, and the car went on, leaving the young doctor and his patient together, and unobserved, except for a dingy looking man who watched them furtively from the further side of a tree.

"Now," said Tancredi, "I am going to call a cab, and take you home. You ought not to be left alone after a fall like that — the faintness is likely to recur." He spoke authoritatively, as a physician should.

"But I live in Hamlin," Millicent objected.

"So much the better for me," Tancredi replied, "for that is on my way home to Carteret. I am really a neighbor of yours even if I do live in another State."

And so a cab was summoned, and they drove away in high spirits — the best of friends, so it seemed to the dingy man from behind the tree who doggedly followed them.

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They found Phineas and Constance in the sitting-room at the Twigg home, and Millicent, in a few words, explained her mishap.

"You are sure she is not seriously injured?" Phineas asked, coming across to where his daughter sat, and touching her face delicately with his slender fingers.

"There is no sign of anything more than shock and the little bruise," Tancredi answered, "but I thought it best to accompany her."

"I am sound and in my right mind," Millicent protested.

"You seem to be assigned to play the part of guardian angel to these young women," Phineas continued. "We are all so glad to meet you again and to thank you both for your interference with the thief, and for your attention to my daughter's injury. Mr. Tancredi, I am blind, as my child may have told you. You can have no conception of the difference such a deprivation makes in one's daily life. But I mention my infirmity only for this reason: — I feel grateful to you, and I should like to know what manner of man you are. Will you permit me to touch your face, as another might look upon it?"

Tancredi rose and approached the old man, whose keen hearing took the movement for an answer. Phineas, then, saying "Pardon me," ran the finger-

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tips of one outstretched hand over the young man's features.

"I thank you," said Phineas, "you have an unusual face and a fine one —"

"Oh, father," interrupted Millicent, "you really ought to add, in your role of exemplar to the young, that 'handsome is what handsome does.'"

"I really ought to address my animadversions much nearer home, my dear," the old man retorted. "Now, Mr. Tancredi, if we may talk without frivolous interruption, you are a professor at Carteret College, I understand?"

And Tancredi, willing to humor the gentle old man's evident interest, and not unwilling, perhaps, to add dignity to his standing in the sight of one who seemed prone to make light of it, told briefly who and what he was.

"Ah, I thought I was not mistaken," Phineas exclaimed. "I knew of your father for many years, a brilliant, and — what is rarer — an absolutely conscientious physician. It was his testimony that cleared that unjustly persecuted man, Garret Oliver, in the great poisoning case ten years — no — twelve years ago."

"Yes, that is so," Tancredi agreed, pleased to hear his father praised. "He stood virtually alone against three of the greatest experts in the country."

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"Two of them were honestly mistaken," Phineas went on, "but the third was not. He was bribed, or had some motive to conceal the truth."

"How could you know that, my dear sir?"

"I knew it by the sound of his voice, just as I now know from the sound of yours that you, like your father, would prove the ready champion of one unfortunate, but innocent."

"I hope I would," replied Tancredi, with a deprecating glance toward Millicent; and he rose to take leave.

Constance, who looked worried and distracted, had, after a polite acknowledgment of Tancredi's services to her, excused herself some time before; so Millicent saw the young physician to the door.

"I hope for the sake of knight-errantry," she said, "that you will be equally kind and attentive to the next hapless stranger you encounter. Of course you will encounter another one before nightfall. They never come singly, you know."

"I have been too happy in the outcome of my trifling service," protested Tancredi, "not to render any other that might offer out of gratitude;" and he walked away from the house in a more exalted mood than was usual to him.

He had been a man to whom woman was an abstraction. Living quietly at his father's home, too delicately brought up to fall into dissipation of any

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sort in his student days, and too refined to be attracted by the grosser vices, he had had that day a new experience.

While holding Millicent in his arms he had been acutely conscious of her lovely helplessness, and of the rounded little form that he supported. If she had shown any timidity or foolish resentment when she recovered her senses, the impression would not have lasted. He would have resisted its influence over him. But she had been so frank, so demure in her drollery, so free from all thought of her own attraction, that he could not keep from enjoying the remembrance of that delightful little burden he had held in his arms. Her mocking ways, too, piqued his interest, and he resolved that he would take an early advantage of the cordial invitation that had been pressed on him by the household and try his chances again in what already was beginning to seem to him the fascinating tourney of love.

When he reached his own room at the college he found himself disinclined either for study or writing. The image of Millicent was far more vivid in his mind than the impression of mere printed or written words. So he closed his desk, and went out for a walk. It was early in the evening, and, as Tancredi set out at a swinging pace, he soon had walked out of the built-up streets, and reached the suburbs. He was still reviewing the

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marvellous events of the day — itself constituting a turning-post in his life — when he was suddenly brought back to earth by being addressed: —

"Excuse me, sir, but I should like to ask a few directions from you, if you are not in too great a hurry."

It was Paul Breen, who, under the guidance of the Providence that watches over those who walk in physical or mental sleep, had wandered thus far, unsuspected, unobserved.

Tancredi saw before him a young stranger who interested him at first glance. So bowing, and drawing to one side of the road, he replied: —

"Glad to oblige you, I'm sure. What can I do? You seem to be ill."

"Yes," Paul replied, "I am in anything but my normal condition. I have had a fever, and have been subject to considerable mental strain previous to the attack. But my physical condition is not of primary importance."

This stilted language awakened Tancredi's suspicions. It sounded like the patter of a professional beggar. So he stiffened a little, and said with a tinge of sarcasm: —

"Ah, is it so? Perhaps there is some financial stringency?"

Paul glanced up sharply, and then moved away as if hurt. But Tancredi, noting the quick change,

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added impulsively, "I beg pardon; that wasn't right. Come, now, what can I do for you?"

"I spoke to you," Paul went on, "because, after observing you for some time, I judged that you would understand me better than any one I have seen to-day. In my present state of mind I must be cautious what I do. May I ask what is your business — or profession?"

"I am professor of applied therapeutics at Carteret College, not very far from here."

"Ah, I hoped you were a physician. Then I can speak freely to you. My mental state is abnormal. I have had a fever, and, though the crisis is past, I am not yet restored to the full use of my memory or reason. To speak plainly, I cannot dissociate the subjective and the objective with certainty. Until I have recovered myself, I do not dare trust my own mental conclusions. There are reasons — reasons, I do not yet care to explain — why I must keep the secret of my identity, and yet I am not capable of directing my own course. For instance, I don't know how I came to this spot. In incompetent hands, I might be judged insane; but I believe that my state of mind is not mania though it certainly is abnormal. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," Tancredi answered. "Now, what can I do?"

"Is it not possible for you to take me as a pa-

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tient? I have no money at present, it is true, but I have that with me which can be turned into money. Is it not possible for you to provide a quiet retreat for me where I can rest until my trouble vanishes or culminates? I have not dared ask any one before — I would not dare ask any one again."

Paul stopped, and put both hands to his head. He was very pale in the half-light, and seemed weak; but there had been no beggar's whine in his tone, no beggar's furtive scrutiny in his glance.

Tancredi hesitated. It was an extraordinary request, and his compliance, without investigation, might be deemed even more extraordinary. But yet, if the fragmentary story was true, if this young man, whose appearance and bearing, so incongruous to his dress, in some mysterious way came close to his heart, was really in such sore straits, could he refuse to give him shelter and care, at least for a few days? He thought of the blind Crier's words, "I know that you, like your father, would prove the ready champion of one unfortunate, but innocent." He thought of pretty Millicent, with the mocking light in her eyes, accusing him of knight-errantry, and of his own pledge that out of gratitude he would render the next service that offered, and he decided. He drew Paul over to a wayside lamp. "Let me feel your pulse," he said.

Then Tancredi examined, as well as he could, the

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pupils of the eyes, and took a hasty look at the condition of the skin and lips.

"You are right," he concluded. "You have had fever; you certainly are not mentally normal; and yet you have no signs of mania. I think you have judged your own state very ably. I will look after you for a day or two, and then perhaps we can talk with a better understanding. Come to my rooms. I can easily make a place for you, and nobody will see you, or know that you are there."

"Thank you," murmured Paul. "I trust you; I know that I can rest."

Tancredi walked slowly along until they came to the city, and then took a carriage. Once in his rooms, he put his patient to bed, whereupon the poor young fellow sank at once into a stertorous sleep that betokened complete exhaustion. Tancredi, all the physician's instinct aroused, watched him narrowly, convinced that — be the man what he might — there was no shamming in that heavy breathing or that quick, light pulse. The patient's left hand hung over the side of the bed, and Tancredi noticed on the third finger a gold ring, one side of which had been flattened to receive several diamonds in a gypsy setting. Tancredi softly slipped it off, and, taking it to the lamp, examined it closely. The ring was an antique, engraved with Arabic lettering, and evidently of much value. He replaced it

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gently, at the same time noticing the delicacy of the finger-nails and the spatulate finger-ends.

"He will sleep for an hour or so yet," said Tancredi, "and then he must have something to eat."

Calling the janitor, Tancredi told him that he had a friend in his room who must on no account be disturbed. Then he went to a late supper, reflecting upon the events that had made the day so unusual in the regularity of his life.

Paul was tossing uneasily, and waked when Tancredi came in, and at first tried to hide his face; but, when he had recovered himself, smiled gratefully and held out his hand. Tancredi said nothing, but held the weak fingers firmly but softly in his own. Then Paul spoke, drawing his hand away. "You must take this ring," he said slowly, "while I have intelligence enough to give it to you."

He drew the ring from his own hand, and put it on Tancredi's finger. The young professor tried to restore it, but Paul resisted. "No, no," he said. "You must keep it; it is all I have to give you — and you have saved my life, and you may save my reason."

"If I can do that, I will keep the ring," Tancredi answered to humor him, and then, smiling satisfiedly, as one who had done all he could, Paul sank again into that heavy, stertorous sleep.

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CHAPTER XIX

THREADING THE MAZE

TANCREDI found that, in assuming charge of this stranger, he had brought upon himself cares and responsibilities most engrossing and trying; yet he did not repent of his knight-errantry, for his was a nature that responded with prompt affection to dependence and trust.

Paul, relieved of the necessity of providing for himself, relaxed physically and mentally. For the first few days his mind wandered at frequent intervals, and Tancredi watched him unremittingly. In the earliest hours of his delirium Paul's mind was full of his prison-life, and he rehearsed parts of it over and over. This rambling talk, at first entirely unintelligible, by repetition and variation became in Tancredi's analytic mind more and more coherent; and he soon had no difficulty in piecing together certain leading facts. He was sure that Paul had been imprisoned, that he had escaped, that his friend in this escape was a fellow-convict, and that he greatly feared recognition and recapture. This fear

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was made patent by the lack of the faintest allusion, even in Paul's wildest moments, to his own identity, or to the crime for which he had been condemned.

The poor young fellow made long speeches about the cruelty of imprisoning an innocent man, and again and again would repeat these words: — "I am innocent, as a new-born babe — as innocent as a new-born babe. Prove it? I can't prove it. I know nothing about the matter. I was asleep, I tell you, and I know nothing about it, nothing, nothing, nothing. I am as innocent — " and so on monotonously.

And Tancredi came to believe in this innocence. If the old proverb "in vino veritas" be true how much more true were these words uttered in delirium? Besides, as Tancredi argued to himself, the man's mind, free from moral restraint, would tend to recur to and renew its strongest impressions. If he had committed a crime for which he had been condemned, that crime would be the ruling thought, and its punishment a mere incident to it. Yet this young man, whose whole appearance proved sensitiveness and unusual refinement, reviewed no scene of violence, no detail of guilty action, dwelling only upon his innocence of wrong, his ignorance of guilt.

With this knowledge that he was harboring an escaped convict, and this belief in the protestations

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of innocence, Tancredi found himself in something of a dilemma. He realized that he must conceal the inmate of his rooms from every eye but his own; and yet the duplicity thus involved cost him great anxiety, to say nothing of its inconvenience. Luckily, his servant, an old colored man, was both deaf and stupid, and Tancredi satisfied him perfectly by the statement that he was "caring for a sick cousin from the country." But in the college there was published by some of the wilder students a weekly periodical, wherein scurrility was often made to serve as wit. This sheet, named "The Horrid Grind," in some way got information of the mysterious inmate of the professor's rooms, and made this lucky find the basis of some rather questionable jokes. These annoyed Tancredi excessively; for he feared that they might lead to an inquiry as to the identity of his guest — a thing which he would have resisted even had he known that Paul was guilty, since illness to a physician was excuse enough for keeping a patient out of reach of the law.

Tancredi, therefore, refused to make the slightest response to the slurs upon him — printed or spoken in jest — biding his time until the sick man could be moved. In about three weeks, Paul was better, his senses returned, and he recalled the meeting with Tancredi, though all since then, and much that had happened previously, was vague and dreamlike. He

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described the state of his mind, and asked whether it were best for him to try to piece together his scattered impressions.

"By no means," Tancredi replied with professional gravity. "During your illness you have told me enough to let me know you have passed through some terrible experiences —"

"I have done no wrong, I am sure, though I remember being imprisoned," Paul interrupted.

"I believe you," Tancredi continued, "so say no more. You have, then, been through some crisis that has stunned your intellect, and much of your brain is dormant. That is one of nature's methods of recovering from shock, and you must do nothing to interfere with her process. You have been nearly a month with me, but no one has any suspicion of your identity."

"Not you? Haven't I told you my name?"

"No, nor do I wish to know it. But for our own convenience, now, and in a plan I am about to suggest, you must have some name or another. What do you suggest? I am going to pass you off as my cousin."

"Will Peter do?" asked Paul with a faint smile.

"Peter will do capitally; Peter Tancredi, since you are my kinsman. How do you do, Cousin Peter?"

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"But you must have seen in the newspapers —" Paul persisted.

"I never read them," Tancredi answered. "It is a strange admission to make, but I have my reasons. To me, there is no half-way course. It is 'drink deep or touch not,' and I prefer to forego them entirely, learning the leading events of the day from periodicals that have time to sift and arrange the news. But, more than this, since you have been here I have shunned the very mention of current happenings. I have adopted a course in this case that satisfies my conscience as much as it gratifies my inclinations; but I realize that I am acting outside of the law. Now, I have no desire to know, nor do I intend to know, the nature of the charge against you, since it might add weight to my responsibilities, while in no event could it change my resolution. To me you are a sick man who has escaped from prison, and is innocent of wrongdoing. As your physician and friend, I advise you to also live only in the present until your health is restored in body and mind. I am about to send you away to the mountains for a rest —"

"Can you afford to do so much?"

"Readily. It will cost little. Besides, you bring me an opportunity to test certain theories of mine. I have long believed that mental troubles demand a complete removal from city life, and a return to

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nature. I wish to test the worth of that cure in your case. I shall consider the experiment well worth its slight cost. I hold that strains, anxieties, noise, dust and all the unnatural friction of city life aggravate always, and sometimes cause, mental aberration. Certainly, they interfere with nature's curative processes."

"My dear Professor," Paul remarked, looking up gratefully from his reclining chair, "my mental faculties are not so dull that you need disguise your great kindness in a wrapping of scientific theory."

"It is nevertheless true," insisted Tancredi. "See — I have stated my theory in a treatise." And he took a book from the shelves and handed it to Paul.

Paul looked at it in silence. Then he opened it, and read a few lines. His face flushed, and he seemed worried. "This book," he said, speaking slowly, as if feeling his way, "is not new to me. It is a part of the past I have lost. But I have read it, or something from it I am sure. If I — only could — recall where — Listen, now; hear me repeat without looking: 'Life cannot exist without heat and moisture. Complete desi—' Oh, God help me, I can't remember!" He stopped abruptly, covering his eyes with his hand. Any attempt to force his memory made his head swim.

Tancredi took the book from him, and replaced

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it on the shelves. "Now," he announced with a physician's positiveness, as he turned to leave the room, "I am going to take you away to-night. You are physically equal to the journey, and mentally you need it."

Then he made the necessary arrangements, supplying Paul with such things as he required, and laying upon him the while the severest injunctions that he was to pass his time in the mountains in imitating the box-turtles he would find in the woods. "Go slow," he said. "Eat and drink what you like; don't fret or think more than you can help; and shut yourself up tight in your shell when anything occurs to annoy you. Remember, these are your physician's orders. As to your future, leave that to me. I will keep watch of you, and, if necessary, will be your *alter ego*. You know Latin?"

"Oh, yes," Paul answered. "I believe I had a fine education once. I remember books, though events are a *terra incognita*."

"Then I predict your recovery. Your mind is only locally affected. We must increase the healthy area, and that the mountains will do for you. You will surely be yourself again."

"But still your Cousin Peter," added Paul.

Late that night, when all was quiet, a closed carriage came to the door of the dormitory, and Paul, wrapped in a long ulster, was assisted into it

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by Tancredi, and they drove away unnoticed except by Bullion, the College policeman, who was at some distance. They hurried to the railroad station, and there took a sleeping-car section. In two hours they were at the small village of Hill Farms, in the mountains, and thence, at first morning light, they drove some fifteen miles further. Tancredi made all arrangements for Paul's comfort at the Tiptop Cottage, the remote house of some farming people with whom he had boarded during a vacation, and the next day returned to Carteret.

Freed from the necessity of caring for his unknown protegé, the young professor could follow his own inclination; and, upon the next opportunity, he went to Hamlin and called at the house of Phineas Twigg. He was received by Constance, since Millicent happened to be out, and his disappointment at not finding her was a sharp reminder to Tancredi of what was becoming his dearest wish and strongest purpose.

Constance greeted him cordially. "I fear we did not make you understand," she said, "how glad we should be to see you."

"Oh, yes, I understood," replied Tancredi positively; "and, if it had not been for an imperative duty, I should have come a fortnight earlier. But I had to care for a friend who was ill. Is Mr. Twigg in?"

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"He went out with his daughter, but both will return before long. Meanwhile, would you be so good as to look over a little book I have, a little note-book, in which I am deeply interested? It is filled with formulae and symbols that are unintelligible to me. It would be such a favor."

"Please let me try to help you," said Tancredi.

While Constance was absent, to fetch the note-book, Millicent returned, and came into the sitting-room with her father. Entering from the brighter light, for an instant she did not recognize the tall young man who rose and bowed; then she cried out suddenly:

"Oh, it's you; it's you! I am so glad!"

Millicent flushed like a little Aurora, looking prettier than Tancredi had remembered her. In fact, he had found difficulty in retaining a clear image of her face, simply because he was so desirous of doing so. But a moment later, her expression changed into a smile, dubious and tantalizing.

Phineas greeted the Professor warmly, but less effusively, and, when they were seated again, Constance entered with the silver-bound note-book, which she handed to Tancredi. He examined it curiously, and finally opened it. One of the first passages he found among the written memoranda was a list of references to his own books — brief extracts with notes and comments upon them.

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"Where did you get this book?" he asked; and in reply Constance explained how she had seen it in a pawnbroker's window among the pledged articles offered for sale, and, as she recognized it as the property of a dear friend, she had bought it, thinking it possibly would serve to clear up a mystery.

"I am going to ask you to take it with you," she continued, "and examine thoroughly the different notes and marks in it — I need not warn you to preserve it with the utmost care. There may be something significant, something of importance, which we cannot detect. The owner is a dear friend of mine, one in great trouble, and — "

At this moment Constance was interrupted by the entrance of two callers — the daughters of a neighbor. They came in with bustling cordiality, and a flow of words an auctioneer might envy.

"Dear Constance — and dear Millicent — " they chimed, "you must have entirely given up any hope of seeing us, didn't you? But really we have been so very, very busy with church-work — you know that runs away with one's time — and with our home duties, that we — How do you do, Mr. Twigg? You needn't say you're well, for you are always well, and how you manage to keep well in the horrid, stuffy air of those court-rooms — "

After about ten minutes of this, Tancredi found that he must excuse himself in order to catch a

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train. Again, Millicent accompanied him to the door, though with a reluctant air.

"Constance motioned me to remind you to be sure to see what you can make out of that note-book," she explained.

"Of course, I will," returned the professor, "but I have hardly heard enough to quite understand —"

"You must have heard of the Breen murder case," retorted the girl. "I believe there was a special report of it issued for hermits. Well, the victim was a young girl whom Constance knew."

"There is so much of that sort of news one cannot keep the run of it" — he began apologetically.

"Nor the walk of it, either, I imagine. This book, then, we believe was once in the possession of that young girl. And Constance Sanderson was the fiancée of her brother, who was charged with the crime."

"Poor Miss Sanderson," Tancredi exclaimed, "I am so sorry for her. That explains her melancholy and distraught air. What became of him? Was he —"

"Oh, dear! He was sent to prison for life, of course, and we all believe him innocent and are trying to unravel the mysteries of the case. That

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is why we want to know just what this little book contains; and that is why, too, it may be important to trace its history — "

"The very point I was about to suggest. Now wasn't it most unusual that such a book as this, with such an owner, should have been pawned?"

"Indeed, it was. Father thinks we should try in every way to find out who pawned it, but — "

"Let me undertake that," Tancredi interrupted eagerly. "Your father is incapacitated, and it is not a task for young ladies — "

"Gladly," Millicent answered with a show of genuine feeling, as she gave him the address of the pawnbroker's shop. "You are so very kind that you tempt us to impose upon you. But now you must go or you will miss that train — "

"As if I would let a hundred trains — "

"Oh, yes, you must, or we might think that there was something fictitious about your assurances. Forgive me for having delayed you." And, with a provoking little courtesy, Millicent closed the door, satisfied that she had regained the ground, yielded through the impulsiveness of her greeting.

But Tancredi thought of that greeting, notwithstanding, finding far more hope in it than he found despair in her sharp words, to which the girl's playful manner, alternating with a bearing of confidence and reliance, gave a delightful inconsistency.

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He thought so much of it that it in no wise occurred to him that there might be some possible connection between his unknown patient and Constance's unfortunate lover. Why should it have occurred, indeed? Nothing had been said of an escape; and there were so many dreadful crimes committed, leading to so many far more dreadful miscarriages of justice, that it was not strange that Phineas Twigg's peaceful home had been affected by one tragedy even as his quiet collegiate retreat had been touched by another. Besides, he was under the impression from Constance's anxious, unstudied words that the note-book had belonged to the young girl — an idea Millicent had unwittingly confirmed by her statement that it had been in Edith's possession.

So Tancredi, walking on air, and oblivious of the meshes in his pathway, hurried to the pawnbroker's, notwithstanding the need for his catching a train. He found the proprietor in charge, behind the desk, while the small boy, whom Adolph had so disastrously encountered, was tying up packages in the rear of the shop. Tancredi produced the note-book, explaining that it was an unredeemed pledge recently bought by a friend, and that it was important to know just when and by whom the pledge had been made.

The pawnbroker made no objection, but found the entry in his register. Tancredi carefully made

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note of the date, and of the fact that the article had been pawned by "Ed Flyaway;" then he asked, rather hopelessly, whether the pawnbroker had any remembrance of the man who had left it.

"No, sir," was the answer. "None whatever. But my boy may know. It's his writing."

Whereupon the boy came forward.

"There's a deal of stew about that little book," said he. "I remember the whole thing — the whole thing, see? First off, it was spouted by a regular old soaker, a hobo; and while he was here he tried to pick a pocket, got scragged and went off with a cop at his neck. That was the fust act of the drammer. Then come in two of the prettiest gals I ever see — when the time was up on the thing, you know; and they bought it, and their hands was a-shaking, and one of them was all dampish around the lights. Act two times. Then come in the villain, I'm a-thinkin'. Anyhow, it was Mr. Somebody-big, and he took down the entry from the book, and tried to tip me off's if I was a waiter. If he'd talked as a gentleman — same as you — I could have told him what I'm telling you. Then you come — and you're the walkin' gentleman, or the lovyer most likely. So, if you want to find out where the book came from, you'll have to seek the hobo what was jugged."

Tancredi thanked them gratefully, and went out

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to catch his convenient train; while the boy remarked to his father:

"Old man — he's the real thing. The other was a fake."

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CHAPTER XX

THE COUNTERPLOTTING

WHEN Richard Naylor, "The Private Detective Agency," had returned to report the failure of his attempt to purloin the note-book from Constance in the station, he found his patron in a state of nervous rage over Paul's escape and continued immunity from recapture.

"Don't tell me," Adolph stormed, when the story had been told, "about the interference of a gentlemanly stranger. Gentlemanly strangers find it advisable at such times to be looking the other way. You say this man got on the train for Nadonk with the girls? Well, I hear that mewling old hypocrite of a Phineas Twigg went there also a couple of days later. Why this sudden migration to a little hole of a town just across the river from Roscoe prison? I don't know now, but I intend to know, and some definite information about this stranger of yours may help me in doing so. Find him, I say, if you want further favors from me. Let me know who he is, what he does, where he goes. I should think

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you would be glad of the job; he seems to have tossed you around in a rough sort of way."

"Damn him," Naylor muttered through his teeth; "and damn her, too — "

"What's that?" demanded Adolph sharply.

"Oh, I only mean that sharp-tongued young woman, sir, that goes so much with Miss Sanderson. I shouldn't mind putting her nose out of joint; she has a way with her that would aggravate a saint."

"Oh, it's Miss Twigg, you mean. You may curse her all you please for all of me. I wouldn't be averse myself to the chance of teaching her a well-deserved lesson; and here is where the information I require may be useful in one way if it fails in another. You say this young fellow seemed greatly taken with her. Well, then, if you pipe her for a day or two you may come across him. There's a clue for you. Hell! if I weren't so tied up with this campaign of Governor Strain for the Presidential nomination, I could out-detect a dozen of you so-called detectives!"

This advice, when acted upon, had proved sound; for the dingy man who had watched Millicent and Tancredi, from the further side of a tree, at the time of the trolley accident in New Chester, was Richard Naylor.

Naylor followed on foot the cab in which they

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drove away, which he could easily do since Tancredi had cautioned the cabman to drive slowly — thinking any jolting might do Millicent harm. He arrived at the station almost as soon as they, and learned from the guard at the gate that Tancredi had bought tickets for Hamlin. With this he rested for the present, not caring to risk a recognition by so decided and athletic a cavalier, and being convinced from what he had seen that they had been in the trolley-car by appointment. He, therefore, gave an accurate description of Tancredi to his keenest assistant, a young fellow named Staples, and assigned him to the task of watching the Twigg house, and tracking Tancredi, when next he called, to his home.

Staples hung about corners and lounged in an adjacent billiard-room for two or three weeks, without the slightest success, and then became indifferent. Hence it happened that he was "laying-off" in a different part of the town the first time Tancredi called after having established Paul in the mountains; but, a few days later, he had the good luck to observe a young man, answering the description, in close conversation with Phineas Twigg on the block below the house.

Once certain of his man, Staples hung on to the trail with a pertinacity and shrewdness worthy of a better cause. He shadowed Tancredi all the way to

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Carteret, and then to his rooms in the College. Knowing no reason for being cautious, and confident that he had not been noticed, he marched boldly up the stairs to the door and rapped. The young professor himself opened the door in response.

"Excuse me, sir," Staples asked, "but are you connected with the College?"

"Yes, I am one of the faculty," Tancredi answered.

"Thank you. I was told to see one of the professors, but I have forgotten the name. I think he was in the law department — is that your department, sir?"

"No; I am connected with the medical school."

"Possibly it was the medical school. You are Professor —"

"James Tancredi."

"No, that is not the name; at least I think it isn't. But I have a memorandum at home and can call again. I was passing, and I thought — I am sorry to bother you, Professor."

"No trouble at all," said Tancredi, as he closed the door at once upon his visitor and the incident.

When Richard Naylor received Staples' report, he lost no time before making a trip to Carteret, and there, by gaining the confidence of Bullion, the College policeman, he was able in a short time to

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learn a great deal about Professor Tancredi and his doings — both real and imaginary. He confided to the policeman that he had come to town in the interest of a young friend of his — a young lady, whose family he knew very well. "I am, while not exactly a relative," he explained, "an intimate associate of her father's, and, as this young professor, who seems rather fly, is keeping company with Katie — There! I didn't mean to name any names. We will call her Miss Brown — we naturally would like to learn if he is all right, you know."

"You can't tell much about any of 'em," replied honest Bullion, mysteriously; "especially the quiet ones."

"That's so, and that is just why it is necessary for folks like you and me and my friends the Browns to be careful when those that hold themselves as much better takes an interest in any of our women."

"Them's my sentiments," agreed Bullion, his sympathy aroused. "Young girls like to fly high, with never a thought about falling low. The Professor is a good sort, and has allus been polite to me, but, seein' it's you, I don't mind saying that there have been stories of doings in his rooms. And, while I was on duty a night or so ago, I saw him sneak somebody out at a late hour, and both get into a carriage and drive off. Since then, he has

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been going back and forth, some'eres, and it's my belief — "

But this belief need not be specified. It was all that was wanted; and Naylor made haste to report his discovery to his employer. Adolph listened with incredulity. He refused to consider that there might be a woman in the case, arguing that Tancredi would not carry on an intrigue in so shameless and foolhardy a fashion.

" Don't you see," Adolph argued, " that, while a college room is the last place in the world for that sort of thing, it is a very different matter when it comes to hiding a fugitive from justice — a man? Why, you thick-witted numskull, you have blundered into a find that may put more money into your hands than you ever had in your life. I was right, I was right, in the clue I gave you. Here is a young fellow, in communication with Paul Breen's friends, who is hiding somebody, and at the same time suffering himself to be thought a rake, rather than open his mouth to defend himself. Naylor, you're a long-eared ass. No other term hits you. You just get on your clearest pair of spectacles and hie yourself to the College as quick as the Lord will let you, and, when you've set your eye on this Tancredi again, don't you ever lose him. You'll land Paul Breen sure. But when you have located him, mind, don't dare make a move without first notifying me.

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I will determine just when and how the arrest shall be made."

"Yours to command, sir," replied Naylor, submissively. "It shall all be as you say. But it's a pity —"

"A pity? Don't you want ten thousand dollars in your clothes?"

"Sure. But I did want to give that Miss Twigg a twist. If I could have waved the Professor's petticoat in her face, it would have sickened her and him, too."

"Well, go ahead and do it, if you can without any delay," said Adolph with a malicious smile. "It is good generalship to break up that Twigg combination. Play the gig to win either way. The scandal is all you need, whether true or not."

"That's so, Mr. Breen," exclaimed Naylor. "What would you do? Write them an anonymous letter?"

"You do, and I'll ruin you. Not if you value your life. On second thought, you had better let this matter alone, and get after Paul Breen at once. If you tackle two things at one time, you'll spoil them both. I'll attend to little Miss Millicent, never fear. An anonymous letter! oh, Lord! That's the acme of a 'Private Agency's' ingenuity; and here we have, in these College papers you brought, the whole story in open print. You said, didn't you,

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that the latest number of the 'Horrid Grind' has a reference to the closed-carriage episode? All right, it couldn't be better. Come — get out now, man, and put for Carteret. Since my poor father's death, I'm head over ears in business."

Notwithstanding Adolph's strictures, Naylor knew his business well enough to appreciate that success in it depended largely upon the discriminate choice and use of probabilities. He, therefore, first of all, tried to analyze the situation. It was a question whether the professor had chosen city or country for Paul's hiding-place. "If this man had been all right in his head," he mused, "he would be safer in town somewhere; but, since he is a little flighty at times, there would be danger of his attracting the attention of the police through some outbreak. Besides, after all he has been through, the drag of prison-life, the exposure of the escape, he must be in poor health; and the professor, being a physician, would notice that, and prescribe a rest in the country. But where in the country? Why, in some quiet joint, where he knew and could trust the people. Somewheres, then, where he had been himself. The thing to do, consequently, is to find out where Tancredi has been in the habit of spending his vacations. If I could question him myself, I'd find out in a jiffy; but I don't dare; he would surely remember me. I shall have to send for Staples."

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Naylor was not idle while waiting for his plausible assistant. He bought a silver mounted pocket flask, and had it engraved with the initials "J. T." He next proceeded to batter and rub the silver with ashes until it lost its newness, and showed signs of wear; putting a little whiskey in the bottle, and striving in every way to give the impression of faithful service.

With this flask, and Naylor's instructions, Staples again called upon Tancredi. He reminded him of his former conversation with him, and remarked that, although he had been unable to find the memorandum he had mentioned, he believed that he was the very man to whom he was commissioned to restore a bit of lost property. "These are your initials," he continued, producing the flask; "and my friend who keeps a boarding-house in the country said it was picked up last fall near his place, and that he thought it must belong to one of the Carteret professors, who had spent a few weeks near-by."

"No," said Tancredi, "I never owned a flask anything like this. Besides," he added with a smile, "the air is so fresh and pure up at Hill Farms, one hasn't the slightest excuse for providing a stimulant."

"My friend lives at Pleasant View," Staples persisted. "Do you know whether any of the professors were staying near there?"

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"I don't know anything about it," said Tancredi, with an impatient glance toward his desk. "You might inquire of the Registrar, who may have the old summer addresses. But, as I don't know of any one with these initials except myself, I fear your friend must decide that finding is keeping. At all events, there is nothing I can do for you;" and again he closed the door upon his visitor and the incident.

While Naylor was thus hopefully engaged, Adolph Breen, in pursuance of his part in the conspiracy, called at the Twigg house and succeeded in seeing Constance alone. His passion for her being wholly selfish, he enjoyed showing his power over her, though he realized that this was due to her solicitude for Paul. Had she cared for him, Adolph might have been kind; but, as she remained indifferent and repellent, he found pleasure in seeing her subject to his will, even when that will could affect her only by causing her suffering. Now, the sight of her pale face and worried expression gave him a certain malign satisfaction, though he veiled it by a bearing grave and dignified.

"I come again to warn you, Constance," he began. "It is a distasteful part for me to assume, but faithful are the wounds of a friend, remember. At all events. I care too much for you to permit you to continue to hazard your reputation for lack of

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what is really common knowledge. This fellow, Professor James Tancredi as he calls himself, who comes here and associates with you freely, has a character so notoriously vile that no self-respecting woman in Carteret will recognize him. No, you can't put me off with that incredulous look. I don't ask you to believe my statement, I don't intend to go into details; but here are a few copies of a College paper, issued by the students with the consent of the faculty. You must know that they would not dare to print a false libel against one of the professors; but here, and here, and here, you can see what they assert boldly, week after week, without contra—"

Constance brushed the copies of the "Horrid Grind" disdainfully away. "I don't care to see them," she replied. "I am not interested. Professor Tancredi is nothing more to me than a pleasant gentleman who once rendered me a service. I am sorry if he is not all he appears to be; but I am too engrossed with sadder, more vital matters to attempt to judge him."

"Ah, Constance, what a pity it is that that is true," Adolph responded. "You can't touch pitch, my child, without being defiled. One can admire a woman who is faithful to a worthy lover. So long as Paul Breen could be considered a martyr, I respected your faith in him; but now that he and his convict-pal — an habitual criminal, mind you — are

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guilty of assault and robbery, you owe it to yourself to recall your womanhood if you still care for the world's esteem."

"But Paul isn't himself, you know he isn't," Constance insisted valiantly. "Since the death of his sister, he is not altogether in his right mind, and —"

"Since the murder of his sister, you mean, he is a dangerous lunatic with homicidal mania."

"I can't bear it, I won't hear you," Constance cried, her face averted, her hand outstretched as if to ward off some evil thing. "You come here, with cunning phrase, to make white black and innocent suffering the vilest guilt; but I know Paul, and I trust him; I do, I do!" And, bursting into tears, she swept tumultuously from the room.

Scarcely had Adolph, well-satisfied with his work, disappeared in leisurely stroll down the street, before Millicent returned home and entered the sitting-room where he had conversed with Constance. She was brimming with joy unrestrained; for she had met Tancredi during her walk, and he had asked permission to follow as soon as he disposed of a business engagement. There had been something in the earnestness of his eye, the pallor of his cheek, that told her what it was he wished to say, even as the catch of her breath, the irregular throbbings of her heart, warned her what her answer must be.

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She was so happy in this intuitive knowledge, so blissfully confident that the world, despite the shadows which lately had darkened her friend's life, would be all sunshine and sparkle for her, that she danced about the room on lightly tripping feet, humming a gay air.

Then she caught sight of the copies of the " Horrid Grind," scattered on the centre-table. She stopped short, and in another instant was absorbing the blue-pencilled passages, one after another, with the instantaneous gaze of a jealous, a wronged woman.

As she stood thus, with indignation flaming from her cheeks and flashing from her eyes, there was a quick, nervous step in the hallway, and Tancredi entered with both hands extended.

" At last, Millicent, at last," he began; and then his arms fell, his form stiffened, as he, too, saw the " Horrid Grind."

" Did some one send you those disreputable papers? " he gasped.

She dropped the copy she held to the floor, and then moved away as from filth. " Why should any one send them to me? " she retorted, as cold now as she had been hot.

" But, Millicent, we are such good friends — you know how dear you are to me — with what hopes I came to-day, but a moment ago — "

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"Well, then, — well, then?" the girl cried eagerly, as she bent forward, her face softening.

"You mean that I must deny — explain? Dear, I do deny, solemnly, on my soul. But I can't explain — the secret, for there is a secret, though thus vilely perverted, is not mine. It would be unjust to one dependent upon me — "

"Say no more," commanded Millicent, pacing the floor, infuriated. "I want to know nothing of a secret that imposes public shame. I want to hear nothing from a man so impudent, so false, as to prate to a woman of his love in one breath and of his superior obligations to a dependent in another. You are too subtle for me in your distinctions, Professor Tancredi. Hereafter I would suggest that your College, with its peculiar facilities, offers the proper field for the exercise of your logic. At all events, I will have none of it." And she strode majestically up the stairs that Constance's faltering feet had ascended. And Tancredi walked heavily down the street, over which Adolph had leisurely strolled, sad of heart, but strong in his loyalty to the unknown whom he called "Cousin Peter."

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CHAPTER XXI

THE SHADOWINGS

Joe and Jake, the State detectives, like the Siamese twins, could not get along well without each other. They were the positive and negative poles, which, when combined, formed the magnet that might draw the malefactor from his hiding. It takes an unusually strong mind to argue by itself the pros and cons of any matter, it being human nature to jump at an opinion rather than to arrive at one by the tedious stages of reasoning. Joe and Jake, through their diverse views, were mutually a mental alterative; and the conclusion reached was often a far more logical one than either was capable of deducing.

When the two detectives had returned "Soci'ty Dan" to the prison, receiving his last satirical thanks for "the 'ahnor of their escoort," they hastened to report their slight success and great failure to the Governor at the Capital.

"Don't waste another moment in idle excuses," roared John Strain, "but get back just as quickly

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as you can on Breen's trail, and stay there until you have found him, dead or alive. Then, without making an arrest, communicate with me, and I'll advise you what to do and when to do it. By the Lord Harry, I'll be better satisfied to make the choice of Adolph's psychological moment myself. And that reminds me, too, to say that you needn't report your doings to my partner, Mr. Breen. He has, I understand, started an independent investigation through that man Naylor who used to hang around the District Attorney's office. That is all right in its way; but it would please me to have you get ahead of him. So do your utmost, and do it quickly, stimulated by the hope of reward and the fear of discharge; for one or the other will be coming to you, I tell you plainly."

"Breen's trail?" repeated Joe, when, somewhat depressed by the impending crisis of their joint career, they tried to agree upon a campaign; "how can we get back to what we were never on?"

"We must have been near it, though," reflected Jake, "or Soci'ty would never have given us that run through the woods. Besides, didn't he say when we pinched him that every step had been further and further away from Paul?"

"Right you are; and, when he picked us up, we had just come across that one-horse rig in the woods."

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"Then the first thing for us to do is to find out whose rig it was and what it was doing there."

The first part of this programme did not prove difficult. The one livery-stable proprietor in Nadonk recollected at once the letting of such a conveyance on the day in question.

"Two young ladies hired it early in the morning," he said, "and, when they returned it at noon, they had an old blind man with them."

"Do you think the young ladies were sisters?" asked Joe.

"Not unless sisters go by contraries. The one of them was light and pale, and the other dark, with red cheeks."

"Which of them did the talking?" Jake then asked.

"The dark one — she seemed less rattled."

"Do you know from where they came, or where they went?" Joe continued.

"I know they asked what was the next train for Hamlin."

"A blind man from Hamlin, hey, Joe?" cried Jake.

"Just wait till I clinch it, Jake," cautioned Joe. "Now, then, my friend, one other question: Was this a tall, old blind man, with dark blue glasses set on the front and side, and a white beard flowing down to his waist?"

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"The identical same," answered the livery man.

"Phineas Twigg, for a thousand," exclaimed Jake.

"And his daughter and her friend," agreed Joe.

"I think you are right, gentlemen," the proprietor volunteered, anxious to oblige officers who had shown such high credentials; "for I'm 'most sure I heard the pale one say 'Mr. Twigg.' But, to my mind, whatever the party had been after, they didn't get, for they all went away blue enough."

This warning, however, had no effect upon Joe and Jake. No wonder they were blue if they had just parted with Paul, knowing that he had barely escaped capture through Soci'ty's stratagem, and that he might be caught at any moment.

"No doubt they had given him money and clothes that might be traced to them," Joe reasoned.

"Yes, and don't you remember Soci'ty's saying that a black-eyed darling had told him to lead us by the nose?" Jake added.

"That must have been Twigg's daughter, I'm thinking."

"Sure; she has taken the leading part right along."

The detectives, then, while they kept close watch for the ensuing weeks on the Twigg household, paid especial attention to Millicent. Many little circumstances strengthened their first impression. The

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girl was active and out a good deal, while Constance, in her anxiety and sorrow, kept within doors. Phineas, too, showed no variance in his going and coming, to the court-room and back, from the routine of years.

The little family was quiet and well-ordered, with few friends, and with regular habits. Adolph Breen called occasionally, and so did a tall, slight stranger, who, as discreet inquiry soon told them, was a professor from a college in an adjacent State, who sometimes had business in town, and then naturally indulged in a passing call. They saw no reason to suspect him of complicity, nor did they suspect him until Millicent herself, through that impetuosity which was at once the strength and weakness of her character, unwittingly caused them to do so.

After her peremptory dismissal of Tancredi, Millicent was very unhappy. She took long walks until the detectives were inclined to think that she was aware of their espionage and was tormenting them; but this was only an evidence of her mental distress. She was so proud of herself, and her own innate freedom from the dross and muck of the world; she had been so proud of Tancredi, and so strong in the faith that he, too, was a creature of light, unblighted and unblightable! The very thought that vulgar intrigue had dared touch him — had dared cast its shadow across her path — was intolerable;

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and, though her heart kept whispering that she ought to trust the one she loved, her indignation retorted that the one she loved could have no need for being trusted.

Phineas Twigg increased this inner conflict by well-meant intervention.

"I am sorry to learn, my dear," he said, one day, "of your estrangement from my friend, Tancredi."

"Has he been complaining to you?" the girl retorted, her pride all up in arms. "How manly!"

"No; he has been justifying himself."

"In what way; by explanation?"

"By simple denial."

"That is not enough for me," Millicent protested. "My husband must be above suspicion."

"It should be enough for you, my child," replied Phineas; "when your father, through that divination of truth and falsity which you know is his recompense for affliction, assures you that this young man asserts the truth."

"Then I must bow before him and admit that I was in the wrong; then I must endure the shrugs and pity of the knowing? Oh, father, I do believe in you, I do, I do; but I cannot, I cannot, believe in him when I know he is hiding something from me. What right had he to put himself in such a position that he could not abide by the truth without fear or favor; what right had he, having once assumed this

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position, to dare bring under the cloud of its mysteries a young girl, whom, if he loved, it was his first duty to shield? I cannot believe in him under such circumstances; for trust between a man and woman, to be complete and enduring, must be reciprocal. Oh, I am so wretched — " and Millicent, appreciating that her reasons became weaker as her emotions grew stronger, hurried away to that solitude which alone has sympathy for one so racked in heart and mind.

All that night she read, re-read and pondered over the miserable screeds in the " Horrid Grind," arranging and analyzing their accusations. One salient fact, capable of proof, stood out preëminent from the mass of innuendo. It was stated that Bullion, the college policeman, had seen Professor Tancredi escorting his mysterious visitor from his room at midnight. Very well, then; she would go to the one reputable eye-witness, and be relieved at least from the uncertainty that was consuming her.

It was Friday, the seventh of July, and Jake, on meeting his partner, Joe, that morning, had remarked hopefully that there were sevens enough in the date to more than make up for " the hoodoo of the day." The detectives were too practical of mind to reflect that what would be good luck for them might be bad luck for the rest of humanity, or to be

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abashed by the slight discrimination if they had reflected; so, they greeted it as a corroborative omen when Millicent, heavily veiled and dressed in black, stole from the side-door of her home, and hurried through by-ways to the railway station.

"She's going to Carteret, Joe," said Jake, after he had stood just behind the young girl in the line in front of the ticket-office.

"Well, that isn't much of a trip," replied Joe, satisfiedly; "not more'n a half-hour over the State line."

"If so be she's going to meet Paul Breen," Jake continued, "there'll have to be extradition papers issued."

"The Gov. will attend to that, all right," added Joe; "once we have located of him and reported on him, we've done our biz."

When the train reached Carteret, Millicent took a street-car for the college buildings. She noticed that two men whom she had seen in the Hamlin station were still her fellow-passengers; but she did not attribute their presence to any interest in herself. They alighted when she did; but remained gazing wonderingly about from the sidewalk, after the immemorial custom of tourists, while she passed through the college-gate.

The campus bore the neglected, deserted air of vacation, though many of the faculty and some of

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the special students still lingered in the cool and cozy dormitories. The only sign of life on the broad expanse of green — and that a sign of still life — was a rotund form in a suit of blue, bedecked by gilt buttons, reclining in the shade of a great elm, too comfortably inert, one might judge, to ever catch anything — not even flies. And thither Millicent directed her steps.

"By gum, Jake," cried Joe, peering through the pickets, "if she ain't going to buzz old Bullion, the policeman, blow me."

"That's a queer start, and no mistake," replied Joe. "But at least we will get on to her curves, all right; there's nawthin' he won't tell us."

Bullion was by nature a fatherly man. The sight of a young woman, so heavily veiled in midsummer, evidently come upon some definite purpose, yet even more evidently uncertain how to carry it out, roused his dormant sense of protection. "Is there anything I can do for you, Miss?" he asked, with an inchoate salute.

"Do you know whether Professor Tancredi is at the college, to-day?" Millicent began, for lack of a better introduction.

"He went down street, Mum, about an hour since, and I'm sure he hain't come back. But you wasn't a-thinkin' of going to his collidge room, I ventur' to hope?"

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"I suppose no young woman would ever do a thing like that?" Millicent suggested.

"Well, I ain't a-goin' to say as far as that," replied the cautious Bullion; "but cert'nly no young leddy, such as you, would do the like."

"Then you have known of cases; then there is some truth in these horrible reports?"

"Some truth in 'em? Gordemitey, my child, a young, innocent mind such as your'n can't pictur' the goin's-on I've seen under kiver of night, and him so proper in appearance, too; as if about to put up a prayer. But there, there, this is no mess for you to bother your pretty head about. You go home and be thankful that he's been found out in time; yes, and go home and be thankful that there is a good friend of your family, and a sorter connection, too, who is lookin' arter your int'rests, and is up to all kinds of snuff while a-doin' it."

"What do you mean?" gasped Millicent.

"Oh, I know a thing or two," continued the gratified Bullion. "If I should call you Miss Katie, now, I wouldn't miss my guess, would I? And supposin' I added a Brown to it, how clus' would I be comin' to the truth, hey?"

"But do you say that some one in my interest," Millicent whispered, "has found out all about this — this dreadful creature in his room, and the midnight drive, and all?"

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"Everything, Mum, as well as I could tell it myself — and better, mebbe, for I seen him gitting busy about town this very day."

"And there's a Miss Katie Brown in it, too?"

"You know there is, my child; so be good and go home, and never, never, think of the professor again."

Millicent was dumfounded by these revelations. Not only had her worst forebodings been more than verified, but some one, out of pity for her, was seeking to learn all the facts. Shrinking within herself, as if from a shame which her own mad actions had brought close upon her, she suffered the policeman to lead her to the college-gate. "Now you go right home, like a good girl, won't you?" he warned, as he again saluted abortively.

"I will, oh, I will," replied Millicent, as heart-broken, and oblivious to her surroundings, she passed down the street.

"Now, Bullion, old man," cried Joe, springing out from behind the gate-post, "just tell us what this is all about."

"Yes, and give it to us straight," added Jake, coming up on the other side, "if you ever expect any favors over in our bailiwick."

After Bullion had faithfully fulfilled his obli-

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gations to his fellow-craftsmen from the adjoining State, Joe and Jake took the street-car for the station in dejected mood.

"Well, good-by to the ten t'ousand," sighed Jake; "we've wasted all our chances in running down a mare's-nest."

"Yes, and with nothin' in it, either," groaned Joe.

"Speakin' of the devil —" cried Jake suddenly, as the car dashed by a dingy man on the corner, who had just come out of a book-store, with an agent's portfolio under his arm, and a small boy with a package and a valise hurrying after.

"An' he wags his tail," finished Joe. "There's Naylor hisself, bound for the station the same as we be. Now, you don't suppose he's really working, do you?"

"Work, nothing! If he wasn't on a job, he would be setting in a saloon, waiting for another, the same as we'd be. Oh, no; he's still after Paul Breen, all right; and it looks as if he was beginning to know how to find him."

"On the book-agent's lay, you think?" Joe suggested. "Knowing of the community but not the spot, and going from house to house to find out, hey?"

"Sure."

"Then we're in luck, after all. All we've got to

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do is to follow him until we learn what he's up against, and then go him two better — "

"But, if he catches a sight of us in the station, the jig is up."

"That's true, of course," agreed Joe. "But if we pass right through to the yard, and stand in one of the deep window-recesses at the further end, we can see him when he takes a train, and jump aboard the next car."

Meanwhile Millicent had reached the station, and, finding that she could not leave for Hamlin for an hour, had seated herself in the cooling draft just beyond one of the deep open windows of the ladies' waiting-room. She was fatigued of body and mind, inert through the reaction from suspense, mortification and grief; but suddenly her energies were roused by the sound of her own name.

"Then, our chase after that little Miss Twigg wasn't a wild-goose one after all," said a voice from without, accompanied by a whiff of tobacco-smoke.

"No, indeedy," replied another voice. "Naylor has got too much beef on his bones to be a book-agent in dead earnest. Why, that's next door to Potter's Field. No, no; he's after Paul Breen, and on the right lay, too, I'll warrant, just as surely as we'll be after him."

"You think he will come here — "

"There is no other station on this line of cars

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— see, there he is now, making for that train that's just about to draw out to the north'ard. Step lively, Joe, or we'll miss our everlasting fortune."

Millicent sprang to her feet and gazed out of the window. She saw the dingy man, who had tried to steal Constance's satchel, and who had looked so venomously at herself when she had tossed away his grimy card, boarding a train, by the side of which the conductor was impatiently waving. Yes, that was the wretch's name — Naylor — a private detective agency — beyond a doubt! She saw the two men, whom she had seen, first in the Hamlin station, then on the train to Carteret, and then on the car to the college, glide around the rear of the train, and enter the car, next to Naylor's, from the further side. They had followed her — they had learned something about Paul Breen's hiding-place — this wretch was in search of him, and so, now, were they! What should she do? Oh, God, what could she do? The only answer was the derisive shriek of the engine, as the train bearing the three men rolled from the yard!

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CHAPTER XXII

THE USELESS WARNING

TANCREDI was glad to devote his leisure to a study of the silver-bound note-book. The occupation proved engrossing; and thus at once kept him from brooding over his trouble with Millicent, while it consoled him with the assurance that, whether she wished it or not, he still was serving her.

To his amazement, he found that, though there were a few entries in the book that were intelligible, so far as they went, the majority of them were expressed in a cipher — a device which Paul, in his anxiety for secrecy, had seen fit to employ.

With all Tancredi's trained powers of analysis and concentration, it was long before he discovered the key, and, when he did so, the matter translated seemed even more remarkable to him.

"I wonder if this learned young lady," he mused, as he worked out chemical symbols, notes of reaction, degrees of temperature and rough plans of apparatus, "knew what she was about. It would seem as if she were preparing scientific lectures — and yet — "

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Had Tancredi known that the note-book had belonged to Paul Breen he would have been less surprised by the nature of its contents; but both Constance and Millicent had given him the impression that its owner was a young girl.

As he went on, he came to a page headed "Tancredi's Formula," and containing notes of an experiment in vibrations invented by himself. These notes pointed out an error in his calculations and corrected it. Tancredi went to his shelves, opened his own work on the subject, and compared the passages. Then he drew up to his table and worked out the problem again and again — but always with the same result — the formula, as printed in his treatise, was wrong; the formula, as corrected in the note-book, was right. He flung down his pen, and exclaimed: "That is not the work of any school-girl or college-student — or least of all of a hobo or 'Ed Flyaway.' Whoever made these notes was a master of the subject. I did not think there was a person in America capable of finding a weak spot in those calculations of mine. The whole thing is incomprehensible — if there is any continuity to these entries they lead to a daring attempt to solve what hitherto has been thought, if not unsolvable, at least unsolved. Well, I will go on to the end — but it is most mystifying."

And Tancredi did go on to the end until he had

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made clear the constituent parts of that discovery which Paul Breen had been so feverishly anxious to submit to him two years before. But, not knowing the sequence or the design, he was dissatisfied and perplexed by what he had accomplished. "Whoever it was and whatever he was about, I hope for his sake he was careful in handling these powerful agencies," he reflected. "A slip would mean a smash, and a dangerous one, too. There is only one thing for me to do if I am to be of any help. I must see Miss Sanderson, and learn all she knows about the maker of these notes — otherwise I am but a blind pilot on a sea of night."

It was the morning of Friday, the 7th of July when the Professor started from his college rooms to carry out this resolution. And about the same hour, it happened, Adolph Breen was strolling toward the Twigg house, musing on what he was about to say to Constance Sanderson.

Man and woman, good and bad, — such are the four prime elements of all tragedy, and they are capable of almost infinite adjustment. The good man under the influence of the bad woman — and there is the strife of the flesh and the soul. The bad man swayed by the bad woman — there is the depth of degradation. The good man attracted and subjected by the good woman — here is all chivalry and romance. But of all combinations, that of the

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bad man and the good woman is the least capable of analysis with certainty. She appeals to both sides of his nature — the angelic and the diabolic; and the result in each case depends upon the proportions of these.

Adolph's attraction to Constance had sprung originally from his best qualities. But, as he had allowed his worse propensities and lower attributes to gain ascendency over him, his feeling toward her had changed. Aware that he could never win her respect or affection, he was the more resolved that he would conquer her and take what he could not deserve. His passion had now reached the stage where he would have murdered her rather than see her ignore him. Allied to it, too, in forcing him against his better judgment to call upon her at this time, was a harrowing suspense. He had not heard as yet from Naylor. He still believed that Constance had been privy to Paul's escape. He still feared that his own ruin was imminent, if his cousin was not recaptured. Might he not then by frightening the girl extort some information from her? At least he would try.

Constance, on receiving Adolph's card, with the words, "I have news of Paul, and I must see you at once," scribbled upon it, came down to him at once. She gave him no greeting, however, but remained standing and even refrained from speaking.

"I know everything that has been going on,

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Constance," he began; " your trip to the prison, your stay at Nadonk, your drive through the woods, your complicity in Paul's escape, everything, I say. More than this, I know where he is hid; I can put my finger on him at any time. Let me but give the signal, and he will be arrested. Why do I hesitate? Because I am willing to give you a last chance — because I love — "

" This is childish," Constance broke in, quietly. " I am willing to listen to you, if it is for Paul's sake. But, if you come merely to insult me, I will not stay."

" Oh, very well," Adolph answered, keeping himself under strong restraint. " Let us then make this a business interview, since you will have it so. I bear that poor devil of a Paul no ill-will, but he shall not ruin your life, nor mine. If you will send him word by me to take himself off to some remote corner of the earth forever — then I will let him go, I will even supply him generously with money, but on condition, mind you, that you give yourself into my keeping — "

" Stop," cried Constance, in ringing tones, " you villain for saying so much, you coward for not saying more. Oh, I understand your vile words, and your viler nature; I am no child to be tricked by rhetorical phrases or dramatic posings. If this is a business interview, once for all I refuse to deal

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with you. I despise you; I defy you. Whatever you do, remember that neither Paul nor myself asks or expects anything from your hands. Go, do your worst, as you already have done, I believe, in this persecution of an innocent man. I will not listen to another word. Leave the house at once."

"Defiance gives a very broad discretion, my dear," said Adolph with a wicked smile — and he began to draw near. But he stopped short, as a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, as a stern voice warned: "I understood Miss Sanderson to order you from the premises — "

Adolph turned and grappled with the stranger. It was Tancredi, whom the servant had directed familiarly to the room. For a moment the two men struggled and strained, hand in hand, face to face; then, as they sprang apart as if to spring together again, something bright was flung from Tancredi's finger, and lay glittering in the full sunshine that shot athwart the floor.

"Paul's ring; oh, my God, Paul's ring!" cried Constance, as she picked up the jewel and clasped it to her bosom.

"Paul's ring, surely enough," repeated Adolph, exultingly. "Then this must be that precious professor of yours. Very well, professor, I am content to leave you to the law that makes short work of those who shelter escaped convicts;" and he took

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himself off with all the dignity his conflicting passions would allow.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Sanderson," said Tancredi serenely. "That is an empty threat. He is too good a lawyer not to know that the mere possession is not sufficient to charge me —"

"I hope so, I pray so," Constance interrupted breathlessly; "but where did you get it, this ring, this ring? It is Paul's, it is Paul's, I tell you!"

"Sit down," said Tancredi, smiling shamefacedly, "and I will explain. I have been stupid beyond belief. For several weeks I have been taking care of Paul Breen, and yet it has not once occurred to me who my patient was. I can't excuse my blindness except by pleading that I have been so deeply in love with your friend, Millicent. Ever since I saw her, I have thought of little else, and all the rest of the world has been in a mist to me. Paul Breen met me in the street, one day, sick, out of his head, friendless — I took him to my rooms —"

"God bless you!" cried Constance, seizing his hand.

"Then I sent him away to a quiet spot in the mountains — Tip-top Cottage, not a great ways from the village of Hill Farms. I knew nothing of him, but, since I learned early that he was a fugitive from justice, I would not let him tell his name nor

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anything that would interfere with my right to care for him merely as one in distress."

"Oh, so good, so noble, so true!" sobbed Constance. "And did you not know that he was convicted of a murder — the murder of his sister?"

"No; but his wandering soliloquies in his fever convinced me that he was innocent of any crime."

"And it was for harboring Paul that these slanders were spoken of you?"

"Yes; there was no other foundation for them."

"Only wait, then, until Millicent returns — "

"But I can't wait," replied Tancredi, "I must leave my fate in your good hands. I must hasten at once to Paul, and keep with him until he is strong enough to be removed to some distant part of the country. Adolph Breen will doubtless have me dogged by detectives, but I will evade him to-day, surely, and once in that remote Cottage we shall be safe until — "

"Yes, go, go at once before it is too late!"

"Not until I have talked with you a little about this note-book," Tancredi continued. "I perceive now that it must have belonged to Paul himself, though my stupidity was so dense that I gathered from what had been said that it was the property of some young girl, a school friend of yours."

"Yes, it was Paul's," said Constance. "I gave

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it to him, and he always carried it. I could not imagine how it came to be pawned."

"I made some inquiries at the pawnshop, and also looked at the books —"

"Books?" Constance repeated.

"Yes, the pawnbroker's register in which a record of the pledge is made. This little note-book was pledged by a tramp, so they said, who gave the name 'Ed Flyaway.'"

"'Ed Flyaway?' how could it be — Professor, that was a family nickname for Paul's sister Edith — the girl who was killed. How could —"

"That is a mystery," said Tancredi impressively, "which you and Millicent and Mr. Twigg must try in every way to solve. It may be the first clue to discovering an infamous plot against Paul. But even more than this, to my mind, is what I have learned from the note-book itself. Paul was absorbed, absolutely engrossed and absorbed, in a deep problem in physics; his work was of a dangerous character, it might easily have caused him to injure himself seriously. Talk this over with your friends — there is no telling how far it may lead. I don't dare to agitate Paul at present, but just as soon as I can question him in the light of what I already know, I will surely know much more. And now, indeed, I must go. Keep strong in the faith; Paul Breen is an innocent man, and it can be proved."

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"God bless you!" again said Constance faintly, as she sank back exhausted in her chair, pressing her head in her trembling hands, and striving to quiet her tumultuous thoughts.

An hour passed. There were steps light, but disordered, in the hall-way, and Millicent, her face ghastly pale against the black veil tossed back from it, hurried into the room.

"Oh, Constance," she cried, "you don't know what I have done!"

"You don't know what has happened!" cried Constance in turn, and, being now the more composed of the two, she explained in a few words that it was Paul whom Tancredi had harbored in his college rooms, and that Tancredi in his anxiety to still further protect him was now hastening to join him at Tip-top Cottage, near the village of Hill Farms.

"Oh, wretch that I am," lamented Millicent passionately, "I have ruined everything! Quick, Constance, give me all the money you have. Already the detectives are scouring the mountains in search of Paul — through me, through me, miserable! I must fly to warn them before it is too late!"

Not waiting for explanation, advice or offer of companionship, Millicent sped like the wind through the streets, and soon was again on her way to Carteret, where she was fortunate enough to make a

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close connection for the mountains. Realizing that she was known not only to the two men who had followed her in the morning, but also to Naylor, she learned through keen questioning of the conductor that, by leaving the train at a station beyond Hill Farms, she could drive over the mountains to the Cottage, and possibly might save time by doing so.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when Millicent alighted at this remote station. She was exhausted from exertion and excitement, she was faint for lack of food, but her black eyes were burning bravely. After some delay, she found a farmer who rather reluctantly agreed to drive her to her destination in his open wagon — the only conveyance the place afforded.

"We'll be in for a wetting among the hills," he grumbled; "for if I don't miss my reckoning that's a thunder-head, hanging to the side of old Mount Ben. Folks that have sense keep under kiver at sech times in these parts." But Millicent by lavish promises urged him on, still grumbling.

Old Mount Ben sent its thunder-head, surely enough, heavy and low across the sky. Darkness brooded over the hills. The wind shrieked through the gullies, and the rain descended in torrents, rent by sulphurous crashes, and lit by forked flashes. Great boughs cracked and fell from the trees, and rocks rolled down from the precipitous banks. The

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horses shied and bolted, with the rickety wagon careening dangerously behind them; but the farmer stuck doggedly to his task, spurred on by a ceaseless flow of sarcasm, flattery, threat, praise and assurances of impossible rewards.

"I think you're crazy," at length he said, when the short-lived fury of the storm was dissipating in distant rumbles.

"Not now, not now," Millicent replied, "though I'm sure I was this morning! Oh, can't you make them go a little faster?"

Paul and Tancredi had watched the onset and conflict of the tempest, far below them, from the windows of their pleasant room in the Cottage. But, when the black clouds, flecked with yellow, had changed into an all-surrounding mist, like the limitless ocean at the base of an islet, they resumed their former diversion — Tancredi reading aloud, and Paul listening contentedly from the old-fashioned lounge. Suddenly, upon this peaceful scene, there obtruded the moist but vehement presence of Millicent Twigg.

"You must fly without a moment's delay!" she exclaimed. "The officers of the law have been hunting for you over these mountains for hours — ever since, through my jealous folly, I put them on your track! Fly, fly, at once; I will wait and mislead them!"

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Paul rose slowly to greet this startling visitant, with a detached air in which there lingered not a vestige of surprise. But in an instant Tancredi had thrown his ulster around her, and forced a glassful of some peppery stuff down her throat. "You darling," he protested, as he wrung the rain-water from her skirts, "to risk your life to atone for some dear little innocent error of judgment, for which I love you the more, if it were possible — "

"Don't, don't, you mustn't — at least not now," pleaded Millicent. "Don't you hear what I say? They may be here any instant!"

Tancredi looked grave. "We are safe enough while this fog lasts," he said, "but it will probably clear with sunset. You say you kept the wagon waiting? That was wise, you noble girl. We will all drive to the junction about ten miles away, where Paul and I can take a train for the west, while you can get one that will bring you home not much after dark. But first you come with me to the good woman of the house and she will rig you out in some dry clothing. I am not going to lose you, my dearest dear, when I have just gained you. Paul, you might throw the fewest things we can get along with into one of those bags, meanwhile."

But when they returned, in a half hour, Paul sat, reading serenely, by the window.

"I am not going," he said, in dull, even tones. "I

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may have lost my senses, but I retain my sensibility. I appreciate, Tancredi, faithful friend, all you have done for me. I have accepted it, too, reasoning, selfishly, I fear, that, after all, you had taken no active part in my escape, and could not be blamed as a physician for not surrendering your patient. But now, if you attempt to elude the officers of the law, with the full knowledge that they know that we are together, your career will be ruined. I am calm now, as you see; but, if you oppose me, if you argue with me, you may excite me to lasting injury. Here I remain — I will not go with you; I am too feeble, too shattered in mind, still, to go alone! It is your duty to protect yourself, to shield this kind young lady from possible scandal. There is no more to say. The decision is mine, and it is final!"

There was no more to say. As a physician, Tancredi dared not resist; as a friend, he felt that after all he might serve Paul better by striving to prove his innocence than by striving to keep him a fugitive from justice. Sadly, though with an intimate joy of their own in their hearts, Tancredi and Millicent drove to the junction; while Paul read serenely by the window, waiting until the mountain mists should roll away, and bring his pursuers to him.

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CHAPTER XXIII

OUT OF HIS OWN MOUTH

It was Friday, the seventh of July — the Friday before the meeting of the National Convention. Already the waves of excitement, radiating from the far-off western city in which the political clans were about to gather, were surging and throbbing through the eastern town of Hamlin, where lived the one man who, above all others, stood out preëminent in popular judgment as the logical candidate.

The "Young Men's Reform Club," with the legend "Strain and Justice" emblazoned on its banner, was to start that evening for the Convention, there to add practical influence to the moral weight which gave it distinction. As an inevitable condition precedent to its departure, there would be a serenade, affording the Governor a golden opportunity to stir the ardor and intensify the convictions of his adherents by a formal speech.

John Strain did not go to the Capital that day, but remained quietly within his home. His old-fashioned ideas of dignity, which thus withheld him

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from the sight of men, did not interfere with that unobtrusive work which is most effective. Through the telephone he was in constant communication with his lieutenants. Special messengers kept arriving with letters and telegrams; and now and again the gravelled driveway crunched under the roll of a closed carriage; or some furtive form darted through the deep portico and unlatched portals for that whispered talk of two which men delight to call a conference. He had the strings well in hand, had John Strain; and the marionettes were bobbing responsive to his will.

Mrs. Strain moved restlessly through the lower rooms, seeing for the thousandth time that exact order prevailed. Her complex nature could not view her husband's increasing honors in a simple, direct way. She had, in his fortunes, a faith that assured her he would be President. The idea pleased her pride, especially when she thought of the triumph it would be over their neighbors and friends. It gratified her affection, too, which found its object in the ideal conception rather than the real presence of her husband. As she thought of him, she always admired and loved him; as she saw him, he often tantalized and offended her. She, therefore, feared that the future might be as distressful for her as it would be glorious for him; and that the higher he rose, the more remote he would be from her. In

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matrimony's community of interests, she felt that she was but a silent partner, and she resented her lack of influence as much as she clung to her proprietory rights. So she fretted, the widening vistas giving scope to her jealous imagination, until, as she stood by his side, that evening, in the front parlor, a stiff, awkward figure in the heavy silk she affected, every nerve and fibre cried out for a chance or incident to break through his amiable but hateful indifference, to arouse and hold his attention by provocation or exasperation, to wage any kind of battle, however insidious or unfair, if only thereby she might gain a blessed relief from the tension.

Beneath his indifference to the normal, habitual attributes of his daily life, somewhere among which his wife was obscurely numbered, John Strain's heart was beating exultantly, as it kept in rhythmic unison with the tap, tap, of the approaching drums. They were coming, the first emissaries of the people, to call him to his task. From this hour on, he would become a personage of national importance, as impressive, as grandiose, as the lure of his ambition had ever depicted; a king among men, destined to join the mighty, superhuman beings that made the world's history. His nerves and fibres cried out, too, but with conscious power, pledging him that, whatever the duty, whatever the emergency, he and they would be more than equal to it.

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The cornet gave its note of warning, the band broke tumultuously into "Hail to the Chief," the crowd pressed and cheered; and, amid burst of bomb and whiz of rocket, John Strain, "in triumph advancing," strode out to meet and greet his neighbors. A stalwart, commanding figure he made on the rostrum of the portico — another and a braver Webster come to the defence of even more sacred rights. His pose and port compelled silence; and then he spoke, not with oratorical graces, but with the simple seriousness of friend to friend over a matter of grave and mutual importance.

He told them that their democracy should be that true aristocracy — the government of the good. That the birthright of every American was responsibility for the common weal. That upon the young men, especially, rested the obligation of the living law.

"This obligation," he thundered, changing from the conversational to the prophetical in harmony with the increasing impressiveness of his thought, "will not down unless it drags with it the whole temple of this great nation. Either our laws, those rules of conduct prescribed by the supreme will of the people, must be executed without fear, favor, exception or reservation; or the latest flower of civilization, the first practical experiment of self-government, will perish from the face of the earth.

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This is the duty of the hour; this is the message you must bear to the representatives of our party about to assemble in national council. It may well be that I shall not be chosen to the high position of chief executive, before whose awful responsibilities ambition shrinks abashed, and duty falters; it may well be that a kindlier, if less glorious fate reserves me for a quiet life among you, my friends. But the duty, the issue, remain insistent, preëminent. In every case and in any event, we must render unto each man according to his deeds, be they good or evil; for so, my fellow-citizens, will inexorable Justice, in turn, render unto us."

The magnetism, produced by perfect health, unusual strength and impassioned and absolute conviction, all concentrated upon utterance, held the throng spell-bound until John Strain, with a smile, dismissed himself from the tripod and became a mortal once more, cordially inviting all present to the hospitality of his home.

The band scurried around the house into the rear hall, there to "discourse" occasionally, while the company were discoursing incessantly. The hosts resumed their station directly under the chandelier in the front parlor, letting their light so shine that all might behold those noblest works of God, an honest man and his wife. And then the line began to advance, disorderly through the portico, with

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decorum through the parlors, each one, as he passed, striving to drop that rarest and most elusive coin, a word in season, in the candidate's mental hat, to wind and press, boastful and greedy, around the dining-room table.

John Strain liked it all exceeding well. The reverence with which he was approached, the heartiness with which he was praised, were the echoes of his fancy, the confirmation of his judgment. His faith in the people was strengthened — that faith which depends so much upon a sublime lack of the sense of humor.

And Mrs. Strain, too, would have been pleased, had only the exigencies of her nature permitted. The glow aroused by flattery now and again mantled her cheek; but, beneath its somewhat acidulated damask, the worm of distrust kept gnawing. Her little eyes sparkled at times with satisfaction, only to pick up and hold out once more the sharper light of suspicion, like constables caught napping. Her ears bent to hear the honeyed words, yet were all intent on the whispers which passed between the Governor and certain of his intimates. Something, in some way, must be discovered which would at once justify and satisfy the irritation of mind and nerves which possessed her.

The full length of the line had gone by; Mrs. Strain had already joined the knot of ladies who, in

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a secondary way, had participated in the reception; the Governor, with dignified deliberateness, was preparing to move in sundry places, like the Scriptures, when a tall figure, venerable from its flowing white beard, with cane extended, felt its way toward the centre of the parlor. It was Phineas Twigg, the court Crier. John Strain turned quickly to greet the old functionary, while his wife, scenting opportunity, grew oblivious to what her gossips were saying.

"Governor Strain," Phineas began, his delicate fingers wandering over the other's massive hand, as if interpreting upraised letters, "I congratulate you sincerely on the prospect of still greater honors. I have always known you to be a man of public integrity, devoted to what you deemed the right. You have been, and I believe you will be, a faithful servant of the people. As such, you have my support."

All this was very well, yet not quite well enough for the Governor's swollen approbation. "The right cannot be relative," he replied stiffly.

Phineas Twigg smiled gently as he drew nearer. "The letter of the law killeth," he murmured.

"A law is not a law that is not enforced," proclaimed the Draconian Strain, not sorry to be overheard creating a legal maxim.

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"There is something higher than justice," Twigg persisted, "laud it how you may."

"And what may that be, sir?"

"Mercy."

"The law has nothing to do with mercy."

"Ah, no," assented the blind man sadly, "and that is why the law is still so distinct from equity. But, Mr. Governor," he continued, his white beard sweeping the other's face in his anxiety to keep his darling purpose from those who had been attracted by their talk, among whom Abigail Alice was in all respects the most conspicuous; "But, your Excellency, mercy is a prerogative of your office, and I beg, I beseech you, at this time of your uplifting, to extend it to one just as far in the depths —"

"To whom do you refer?"

"To Paul Breen."

"What, you ask mercy for an escaped convict, still at large, in contempt, in defiance of the just judgment of a competent tribunal —"

"Only after he has been recaptured, as he soon must be with the enormous reward offered for him," explained Twigg. "Then, only then, it is that I entreat you, when the hopeless, deadly routine of his punishment has been resumed, to review the evidence of his case. I am positive of his innocence —"

"Oh, you still cling to that fetich of yours?"

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"I have verified it," Phineas asserted firmly. "Constance Sanderson and I have not been idle. We have proof that Paul was engrossed in scientific experiment at that very time, so dangerous that the slightest slip might have caused the injury which he believed he had suffered. We have proof of mysterious machinations against him — a note-book, in which he kept his most secret formulæ, was pawned on the very morning of the railway accident by a tramp, in the name of 'Ed Flyaway' — Edith's own nickname — "

"Well, well, Phineas," the Governor interrupted soothingly, "I'll see, I'll see. But we must first catch the hare, you know, as the saying is. If you have new evidence of a serious nature, you can then submit it to me with the assurance that it shall have most careful consideration. But I have already had one cock-and-bull story from a tramp — the very rascal who assisted in the escape — and I hardly think I want any more of that sort of proof;" and with a look, half-pitying, half-impatient, he turned to one of the groups of his guests.

The last rocket had sputtered, the crowd had dispersed, taking their cheers with them, the Young Men's Reform Club had swung down the street to the station to the tune of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again," and John Strain was alone in his library. His chest still heaved proudly over

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his exultant heart. His eyes still blazed with the fires of power and primacy. "I'll get there," he muttered, "I'll get there sure! Why, the very stars in their courses are fighting for me. The people can't think of more than one thing at a time, and their minds are now set on my identification with the cause of justice. Oh, that proclamation was as politically shrewd as it was righteous; and my speech of to-night will confirm my position on the supremacy of the law."

He stepped to a long mirror and surveyed himself from head to foot. "You're a strong man, John Strain," he soliloquized. "From first to last you have been a great, big strong man. I swear, when I contemplate your career, I'm proud of you, damned if I ain't! Up, up, up, you've climbed, never hesitating, never getting dizzy, never missing a rung or losing your head. Mr. District Attorney, I salute you; Mr. Governor, I salute you; Mr. President — Bosh; what am I thinking of — that sounds too much like the tragedy of Macbeth! Is my vanity playing the part of the witches? No, no; Macbeth's success was founded on crime, while mine is founded on good works. No Glamis, Cawdor, and then a smash-up for me, while Justice does her perfect rendering."

Again John Strain scanned his reflection in the mirror. Perhaps the flickering gas-jet cast a

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strange shadow. Perhaps some uninvited, unconscious impulse of thought left the trace of its swiftness on his brow. At all events, he caught an odd look, a mere turn of the eyes, doubtless, yet for an instant again recalling, again resembling even, the face of Paul Breen, calm, candid, unconquerable. In an instant it had come and it was gone; yet the time served to make this strong man weak.

As he stood, displeased, perplexed, mortified, the door opened, and Mrs. Strain advanced intrepidly to the fray. "What was that old humbug of a Phineas Twigg saying to you?" she demanded.

Now, this question was exactly the last one that John Strain cared to answer; for it involved a discussion of the one person whom he was again resolving to keep out of his mind.

"Oh, I don't know," he replied evasively; "you can hardly expect me to recollect all the commonplaces I was forced to hear, can you?"

"Men don't get half inside of your ear to whisper commonplaces, nor do they look like a Hebrew prophet while doing it, either."

"But, my dear, I have already explained to you that whatever it was, I do not recall it — don't you think you are a trifle unreasonable?"

"Un-reas-on-able?" repeated Mrs. Strain in shrillest staccato, "'is it unreasonable to doubt a lie?

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He brought you a message from that creature he is harboring, from Constance Sanderson, you know he did. I distinctly heard her name."

"You are mistaken, madam;" and the Governor seated himself at his desk, and turned over some of its voluminous papers.

"Oh, you can't put me off with any of your Executive airs," cried his wife passionately; "I know better; I heard it, I heard it, I say! It isn't the first time, either, that you have had a secret communication from that creature. Do you think I'm blind as well as deaf and dumb? When she was here, didn't she fairly live in this room, while I, your lawful wife, was made to feel like an intruder? When she was driven out, didn't she have the audacity to leave you a package, a token of some sort, before my very eyes? And yet, such a man as this dares to prate about justice and to hope for the Presidency. I tell you, if you get the one, you'll never get the other. Oh, oh —" And finding the inadequacy of language a still great aggravation, Mrs. Strain swept out of the room on the whirlwind of her passions.

John Strain laughed heartily over this last vicious quip of his wife's, which was too similar to forensic amenities not to be appreciated. The little diversion of her attack was just what was needed to restore his mental equilibrium; and now he was

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himself again, though with spirits somewhat relaxed.

"Poor old Abigail," he mused, "she'll cut a novel figure in the White House, to be sure. I wonder what's eating her now? What was it she said — that Constance Sanderson gave me some token on leaving? What nonsense! But let me see, though — let me see."

By a strong mental effort he recalled the incidents of the evening when Constance had been driven from his home. Yes, the girl had handed him something, a package, done up in white tissue paper, and bound with black ribbon — at the same time referring to his kindness to her. What the deuce had become of it? He recalled his talk with Adolph in that very room, the library, wincing as he recollected that it had been concerning Paul — the eternal Paul. Yes, again; he had tossed it on the shelves, of course, and it must have fallen down behind his bookcase, as some important papers once had fallen. Otherwise, Mrs. Strain's sharp eyes would have ferreted it out. Why shouldn't he look for it now?

With an almost boyish eagerness Governor John Strain got down on his reverential hands and knees, and fished under the shelves with his cane until he drew out the identical package, its virginal hues somewhat marred by dust. He took off the wrapper,

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and discovered a book, the leather binding black and shining from years.

"Hullo," he muttered, as he resumed his seat and put on his glasses, "this is something of a find. The learned De Lyra, by Jove, and a first edition, at that! It must have belonged to her father, the old parson."

John Strain examined title and colophon. With the particularity of a book-lover, he carefully moved the covers back and forth. As he did so, a paper, filled with the fine, cramped hand, so often seen in clerical manuscripts, fell on the desk before him. It was a letter, addressed to himself, and signed, "Samuel Sanderson." It ran as follows: —

"I am constrained by a sense of impending mortality to inform you by letter that a few months since Mrs. Neil Breen, a member of my church at Gloriosa, moved by anxiety for her soul's salvation, confided to me as her pastor the story of her early life. When but a young girl, she went through some form of ceremony, whether legal or not she hardly knew, with a youth of her native village, and, thereafter, for a brief period, they secretly consorted as man and wife.

"This young man, however, instigated by worldly motives, brutally cast her off, declaring the marriage a sham. She ran away from home, married Neil Breen, and settled with him in the southwest. But

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she never told him, nor had he reason to suspect, that she was not the maid he thought her, or that Paul Breen, whom he unquestionably recognized as his oldest child, was in reality the offspring of this former and perhaps meretricious union.

"I advised her that it was best to let well enough alone, and that she must bear by herself the cross of her sin and deceit, lest some greater evil should spring from it; being persuaded especially thereto by the present happiness of all concerned and the nature of the man, Neil Breen, who, though ordinarily easy-going, was yet inclined, when enraged, to strong drink and consequent violence.

"In thus putting expediency before right, I now feel that I, too, have sinned; and I bow humbly and in contrition before the just wrath of the Almighty.

"Mark this — how events war against those who neglect to follow implicitly the divine light. This very evening, in this remote western town of Fremontia, surrounded by utter strangers, I was moved by a sense of security, and in a spirit of vainglory, to detail this story at a revival meeting, as a warning against impulsive and ill-considered confession, mentioning the parents but generally, of course, yet, in my earnestness giving particulars by which any of their acquaintances might identify them, and even referring to the boy Paul, and to a younger child,

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Edith, by their baptismal names. At that very moment of my self-complacent folly I raised mine eyes; and lo, this Neil Breen, who, I had so confidently assured myself, was a thousand miles away, was rushing headlong from the church, his face distorted with rage and revenge, like one possessed of a devil.

"I have sought him everywhere, but in vain; and now, as a last resort, not knowing at what hour the last summons cometh, I write to warn you to protect this woman, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh in the sight of God, and this hapless youth, Paul Breen, the fruit of thy loins; for she, in the days when her comeliness tempted thee, was called Mary Lane; and thou, John Strain, — thou art the man!

"Don't think to evade thy sacred duty and responsibility, or to hide thyself from an offended God. Though years elapse, burying the past in their ruins, though interests, ambitions, wealth and station all combine to cause thee to forget; at the acme of thy fate, in the hour of thy triumph, this secret sin shall find thee out!

"For thus saith the Lord God that faileth not: — 'Thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun!'"

John Strain grew livid and cold, like one before the bar of Omniscience. He never doubted the truth of the message. It was set in his brain in

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letters of living fire. Mary, Mary Lane, whom he had so ruthlessly sacrificed to his ambition, but yet had loved after his fashion of preferring himself — Mary Lane, passing from his sight forever, a pathetic, despairing figure, with the bowed head of womanly resignation, dead, long years ago. Paul, Paul Breen, whom he had pursued so relentlessly, of whose misfortunes he had made the stepping-stones to success, his own, his only son! Oh, the irony of fate! To think of his proclamation, with its absurd apotheosis of Justice! To think of his boasting of the supremacy of the law! Out of his own mouth was he condemned! For the first time in his life John Strain saw himself as he really was; and, like our first parents in Eden, he was ashamed of his nakedness. Before the eternal tribunal, which had thus suddenly summoned him from the petty pomps and vanities of the world, his spirit bowed its head and pleaded "guilty."

Then the universal human impulse to seek the line of least resistance, which men call hope, asserted itself. Paul was missing; he could not be found. It might be years before there was a trace of him — and Strain himself could call off the bloodhounds already on the fugitive's track. Meanwhile, public interests should not be allowed to suffer; in the eyes of the people he still was all he had seemed to be. Why, then, should he not make himself as

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mighty as possible, for the very reason that he might be the better able to serve his son when the fitting season came? Oh, he would make good, he would requite, a hundredfold — but now, but now —

The front-door bell rang violently — once, twice, — unusual sounds, at that late hour, in his quiet home. Presently, the maid half-dressed, announced sleepily that Mr. Adolph Breen and the two State detectives were below.

"Tell Mr. Breen to wait," John Strain ordered, "and show the two men up." But scarcely had the maid started away than Adolph appeared.

"My God, Governor," he exclaimed, upon seeing Strain's attitude, "what is the matter? You haven't gone stale, have you, before the race is fairly begun?"

"Oh, it is nothing, nothing but a little temporary fatigue. You must go down and wait, Adolph, — wait until I have seen Joe and Jake."

"But I have news, urgent news, of vital importance —"

"Go down, I tell you," commanded the Governor, pushing the young man from the door, as the two detectives came up the stairs.

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CHAPTER XXIV

PAYING THE PENALTY

THE events of the day had been too exasperating for Adolph Breen's composure, settled and characteristic though it was. He paced the lower hall, aflame with impatience and chagrin; and, when at length Joe and Jake slowly descended, under a joint burden of bewilderment, he shot up the stairs past them, according not even a curt nod to their salutes. "I thought I was of more importance than two snide detectives," he complained, as he burst into the library.

John Strain closed the door, and seated himself at his desk in the shadow of the drop-light. "Sit down, Adolph, and calm yourself," he said gravely. "It was the importance of the thing, not the persons, that governed me — a matter of the highest consequence."

"I doubt if it is as exigent as the news I bring."

"And that is?"

"I know Paul's whereabouts. He is hid in a farm-house on the mountains, not many miles from

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Carteret. You must issue your request for extradition at once. I, myself, will take it to the Governor, and see that a warrant is issued and executed. To-morrow's evening papers, filled as they will be with editorial comment on your speech to the Reform Club, will also carry the telegraphic news of the arrest. Nothing, nothing, could be so pat. It is the dramatic climax — an illustration of your words, a proof that you are as sure practically as you are sound philosophically. It makes you the man of the hour, indeed; and drives home and clinches the nomination. Come, let me act as your amanuensis."

But the Governor shook his head, as he restrained the other with a gesture. "Let us look before we leap," he objected. "I fear it would not be politically wise after all. Sometimes, too much of a good thing is bad. The speech was all right in its way; it will serve as a slogan. Why emphasize it with any particular case? Human nature is a pendulum; when its sense of outrage has been appeased it straightway swings back to pity. It is a short step from prosecution to persecution, my boy; and I don't care to take it just at this time. Let well enough alone, I say."

Adolph stared as if the Governor were mad. "Why, why — " he stammered, "you don't mean — "

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"I mean that I shall hold the arrest of Paul Breen for future deliberation."

"You mean that you hesitate about arresting him?" repeated Adolph, still bewildered.

"There, there," said Strain in a fatherly way. "Don't let us fritter away the enlarging, the glorious present by disputing about trifles. I like you, Adolph, I have confidence in you. High as I am to climb, I yet have the strength to take you along with me. You are recognized as my right-hand man; very well, then, where does the President's right-hand man sit? I make no promises, you know me too well to need them; but keep your faith in me, believe that I have sufficient motives, good motives, yes, the best of motives for what I do, even though I don't always explain, and there is no limit to what I will do for you in return. I'm glad you came in, to-night; I was just about to send for you. The situation is fine, improving every hour, but there's work to do. I want you to take the first train west and stay day and night at my headquarters as my personal representative. See those telegrams? Some of the delegates are already arrived; they should be coddled and kept steadfast. The National Committee have a session Monday evening, when the platform will be discussed Now, I want it distinctly understood that my principles, my views, must not only be recog-

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nized, but adopted, promulgated as fundamental planks — "

"Your principles, your views," cried Adolph, "what are they? You have belied and repudiated them. Do you think that I am going to stultify myself by standing for such a weather-vane of a man? No, sir; not one step, not one, will I move, until Paul Breen has been arrested."

"I am your chief."

"Yes, but you sha'n't commit hari-kiri without my staying your hand."

"Oh, we haven't reached so serious an alternative, have we, Adolph? If this matter remains a secret between us, no one will be wiser; and a secret, you know, cements friendship. Come, I don't mind confessing that I have a personal feeling, yes, a deep personal feeling. I fear I have been too severe, too vindictive, I may say, with Paul. After all, admitting his guilt, he has been punished bitterly; so young, so inexperienced, so habituated to refinement and luxury, shut up for life in prison, dead to his friends, dead to the world, yet alive — my God! alive — to realize it, to feel it. Let him have his liberty, I say. He earned it by a bold brave dash which you can't help but admire. Let him drop out of sight and memory; there is a higher law than statute law, after all; and it is enacted by the heart rather than the brain. Ignore the in-

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formation, then, and let him go. You have no feeling, of course. Your only interest, I appreciate, is to strengthen my position before the people. Well then, I confide it to you, I have a compunction, a positive compunction, against building my political success on Paul Breen's suffering."

The Governor's humble, almost entreating words, so different from his ordinary style of speech, restored Adolph's mental equilibrium. Here, surely, was a chance for personal advantage. He realized that the inducing cause must be powerful, indeed, to work such a change; and he resolved by all means to learn what it was. Then, ah, then, he himself would be great by being the master of so great a man; and once the master, his first edict would be the instant arrest of Paul Breen!

"But that is exactly what you have been doing for the last few months," he replied sharply. "The whole fabric of your reputation before the public rests upon your relentless pursuit of Paul Breen, and it rests there by your own deliberate choice. His case furnished the text for your memorable rhapsody on Justice; are you now going to eat your words? Are you now going to take the fatal step from the sublime to the ridiculous? Nonsense, you can't fool me. You are evasive, insincere. Talk about compunctions? Why, you would people hell for your ambition! Either trust me with your real rea-

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son for such an extraordinary change of base in the very front of the enemy, or choose as your right-hand man some one subservient enough to hold the position under conditions so contemptible."

There was silence in the half-lighted room, always shadowy from its sombre hues and deep recesses, as John Strain deliberated; that silence which fittingly attends vital suspense. He was making a fight, as desperate as it was distasteful, for his career; but already, in his innermost heart, that untarnished bit of his true self that had thrilled so agonizingly over the dying clergyman's letter, he knew what he would do if he failed. If Adolph took the rational, practical, passionless view, so natural to one of his worldliness, why, then events would ensue according to the logic of their preparation. He himself would be nominated, would be President, would deserve well of the people because he served them well. Adolph would be his right-hand man, with whatever honors he might prefer — perhaps might become his political heir. And Paul — why, Paul should be removed secretly and surely to Europe, there, under another name, to begin life again — a life so filled with all the luxury, poetry, refinements and romances that wealth can procure, that his experience would be as a forgotten dream, its vague recollection returning only to intensify and give zest to happiness.

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But if under Adolph's consistent, almost judicial condemnation of Paul there had lurked malice, if personal hatred, hitherto unsuspected, was the real motive for that persistence in urging his arrest which but now he had attributed to zeal for his own cause, why, then, it would be just as well that Adolph should know the truth, since he, himself, out of justification would be forced to proclaim it to the world — better, indeed, that he should know it, unexpectedly, before all others, since the shock of the revelation might reveal the nature of his animus.

"You are right in complaining of my insincerity," the Governor said quietly. "You have had my full confidence and deserved it; you shall have it now. I have this night learned from a certain source that Paul is my son."

"Your son? My God, what do you mean? Your son?" exclaimed Adolph, rent by uncontrollable emotions.

"My son, my unknown, my unsuspected son," John Strain repeated; and he showed the letter, and told the story of its finding.

Motionless, speechless, the two men faced each other, held by the deeper, truer communication of their eyes. There was silence in the shadowy room, as utter, so it seemed, as their absorption; and yet men live and move until they die of old age, uncon-

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"'YOUR SON? MY GOD, WHAT DO YOU MEAN?'"

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scious that the very air they breathe is vibrant with the music of the spheres, so intent are they upon their trivial interests. Utter silence, it seemed; and yet the alert to hear might have caught a sound from without the partition-wall or side-door — a gasp, a sigh, a sob, or perhaps nothing more than one of those inarticulate moans that haunt houses when they grow old and are full of pain.

"If Paul is your son," Adolph said at length, feeling his way and gaining confidence as each proposition met with no resistance, "If Paul be your son, no one knows it, no one can know it, except you and me. The woman is dead. Sanderson is dead, and the fact that he wrote to you died with him. Well, then, let this unknown and unknowable relationship be a part of the dead past. What does it amount to, anyway? The accident of a vulgar intrigue — why, I would snap my fingers at a score of them. Sensible men never waste thought over the sighs and kisses of their youth, any more than they do over the marbles and lollipops that preceded them. And you, of all men — John Strain, the rugged, the practical, the masterful, grown sappy and sentimental. Why, the whole world would laugh — laugh to scorn, before it repudiated and disdained. But if you must throw a sop to sensibility, do this. No one can see you except me, and I won't look. We'll go out west

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together, to-morrow, the first thing. It will be an innovation, but a popular one, to have the leading candidate on the ground, ready to make good his candidacy by presence and word. People like to have their favorites show individuality. Meanwhile, Naylor, the private-agency man, in my pay, as you know, will inform the Carteret authorities of Paul's whereabouts, and they will lose no time in arresting him. The Lieutenant-Governor, in your absence, will make requisition; and, before you return in triumph, the foremost man of the day by royal right of achievement, Paul will be back in prison, as dead and forgotten as his mother was to you from the day you deserted her. Why should you treat him better than you treated her?"

"Having sinned once, why shouldn't I sin again?" John Strain returned, in low, hesitating tones.

"Yes, since you are a man among men, and not a saint among saints. Yes, since the millennium still justifies its name by keeping a thousand years away. You will search history in vain for an instance where a great man allowed his career to be impeded by a wretched bastard, a condemned criminal, a cowardly sororicide —"

"Look here, Breen," the Governor broke in suddenly: "You accused me of insincerity, just now, and I made amends by a frankness somewhat rash,

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I fear. But it strikes me that confidence is a reciprocal relation. What, then, is your animus against Paul? What causes you to rejoice in his misfortunes, to glory in his vilification? Of course, you are devoted to me in a way, I admit that; but you are too guarded, too self-contained, too selfish, I may even say, to yield to such emotions, unless passions, purely personal, are too much for you. You'll have to be candid, I tell you frankly, if you expect me to follow your advice. I may be sappy and sentimental; but I'll be a stalking-horse for no man's secret desires, mark that."

Adolph laughed, but the light of his laughter left his eyes, its flippancy left his tones, as he proceeded. "You are right, Governor," he admitted, "I am selfish, and I have good and sufficient reasons for putting Paul out of all reckoning. We never liked each other even as boys; he assumed a superiority of motives which was very irritating. What is there unnatural about that? You have explained that there is no real relationship between us. Well, I was fond of my little cousin Edith in a way; and if he hated her so virulently as to kill her, why shouldn't I hate him to the extent of wishing him punished for it? Of course, I profit by his condemnation, I don't deny that. There is my uncle's fortune, which would have been his; now it becomes mine since my father is dead. But isn't that

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proper and right? Would you have Paul inherit through his own murderous wrong? Do you think your by-blow has any equitable title to the property in any event? Damn him! — of course I want him to rot in prison! Why shouldn't I?"

"And there is Constance Sanderson?" suggested Strain persuasively.

"Yes, there is Constance Sanderson," repeated Adolph, springing from his chair and pacing the floor restlessly, "a girl who would care for me, love me, give herself to me with joy, by the Lord, were it not for the infernal, namby-pamby sentimentality with which he has bewitched her. Do you think I don't know? Do you think I forget or forgive? Why, what would be the result of your precious idea of letting him alone, letting him drop out of sight, as you say? He wouldn't drop worth a damn. He is already in communication with her; and they, this girl, that old snivel of a Twigg, and some benevolent collegiate ass named Tancredi — oh, I am on to them all — are conspiring to prove him innocent. Let him once be free to direct them, and they will restore him to life, liberty, reputation, fortune, love — depriving me of all I have, and all I hope for; perhaps contriving that I shall be blamed for his conviction — Oh, you ask me why? There are a thousand whys, man; and the first and foremost one is more than sufficient: — I abhor him!"

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Adolph uttered these last words, standing over against the Governor, his arms extended, his body quivering with passion. There was a strange expression on the other's face, quiet, amused, yet resourceful, which at once restrained and disconcerted him. Had he made a mistake? Had this man, whose strength he should have feared, even while thinking him weak, led him on to his own undoing? At least it was now too late to retreat; naught remained but to play the game to the finish. He resumed his seat, gathering together nerve and muscle into his normal poise, and continued in the even, yet incisive way, which became him so well.

"Now, look here, John Strain," he said, leaning forward with argumentative forefinger, "at length we understand each other. We have a mutual interest in the capture and incarceration of this escaped convict, a mutual interest, so strong, so vital, that I do not propose to risk the possibility of its being jeopardized by one so irrational as to take the doubts and hesitations of mental and nervous exhaustion for the qualms of conscience. As soon as I leave here, this very night, I shall telegraph the Chief of Police of Carteret, informing him where Paul is concealed. I will help you in spite of your present sickly self, and, as soon as you are really yourself again, you will thank me."

"You will, will you?" returned John Strain,

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pushing back his chair, and rising to his full height. "Well, go ahead, perhaps it is just as well. Executive clemency cannot be extended to a fugitive from justice until he is in custody; and, as God lives, I'll pardon Paul as soon as I hear that he has been arrested."

"You don't dare!" cried Adolph, confronting him with clinched fist.

"Who ever said 'dare' to John Strain? My ambition did tempt me, I admit with shame; but not you, Adolph Breen, not you."

"If you do," Adolph threatened, "I'll publish this story to the world."

"All right; it will save me the trouble of doing so."

"You will lose the Presidency —"

There was a low fire burning on the deep, old-fashioned hearth, mainly in accord with a fancy of the Governor for its soothing cheer, though the night air was so chill as to make its warmth agreeable. He snatched a heavy file of papers from his desk, the telegrams, letters, pledges, and memoranda, which in themselves constituted and contained the orderly plan of his campaign, outlining and making feasible successive steps of action, and rent it into tatters in his great, strong hands. "That for the Presidency!" he said, as he strewed the coals with the fragments.

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"You will be impeached for malfeasance as Governor —"

"My term will expire before the Legislature meets; but they can try it on if they like. I may have some interesting facts to divulge by that time."

"Anyway, your career is ruined —"

"Damn my career! I'll still be the best lawyer in the United States; and, if I lack for any business, the vindication of my son, and the recovery of his inheritance, will make a pretty case or two."

"Oh, I could kill you —" Adolph muttered through his teeth.

"Not could, but would, you mean," corrected John Strain, looking down, with contempt, from his stalwartness.

"Then it is to be war to the knife," snarled Adolph, his hand on the door-knob.

"Likely enough on your side," agreed the Governor; "but I fight openly."

John Strain sat in his great arm-chair before the glowing hearth, on which still fluttered and crackled the ashes of his darling hopes. The shadows of the room lightened and darkened about him, like friends through good and evil report. The silence harmonized with his mood, it was so sombre and intense; and yet, so tranquil. He was glad that he

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had decided; glad that he had made manifest the road along which he must march. Always impatient of self-analysis, and prone to seek motives in deeds rather than deeds from motives, he yielded not to vain regrets nor bent under the burden of remorse. He did wince, it is true, when some of the fine phrases he had fashioned in praise of "Justice" recurred to him; yet, with the shame, was the stern resolution that they should be made real. It was this thought, rather than any tenderness for Paul, that inspired him — that he owed a penalty and must pay it; that, as he had despoiled, so he must restore. And so simple and sure was the conviction, that he had been conscious of no mental action in formulating and accepting it.

Even his iron nature felt the fatigues of the day; and a dreaminess, which was rest rather than sleep, hovered over him. Once and again he saw Mary Lane, not the retreating figure of distress, so pathetic, so awful, in its mute accusation; but as she had looked on him when she said: "I love you, John." Then a sound, faint, uncertain, called him back to the reality of the present. It was a gasp, a sigh, or a sob, as if some one hesitated without.

John Strain rose from his chair and opened the side-door. There stood Abigail Alice, the woman whom he had taken as wedded wife, in the sight of God and man, so many years before!

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CHAPTER XXV

FACING THE MUSIC

"WELL, you listened, you heard?" John Strain asked, as he saw his wife, her face white and drawn, leaning against the casing of the door.

"Yes, I listened, I heard all."

"Come in, then." And, closing the door, he led her not unkindly to a chair.

"Let me see that letter; it is my right," at length she said, brokenly; and, without a word, he handed it to her.

With wavering hands, she took her glasses from her reticule. With trembling fingers she adjusted them, slowly, not without difficulty. She leaned forward under the light and read the pages, closely, quaintly written, once and again. Her poor, flat bosom heaved as pitifully as a child's; and, as she removed the glasses and laid the paper in her lap, tears fell upon it, sealing it with anguish. "What am I?" she moaned. "Oh, what am I?"

"You are my wife, my undoubted, my honored wife!" asserted John Strain.

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"But this letter says there was a ceremony, only a few months before, only a few months before our wedding, John."

"It was a mockery, a jest, of no legal binding, forgotten, unknown. The only witness is dead; Mary Lane and this clergyman both are dead. I, alone of all the living, know whether or not there was even a trace of validity to it; and I swear, I swear to God, that there was no marriage, no thought of marriage, except my marriage to you. I would stand torture; I would rot in my grave and feel and endure every instant of its decay, I would burn everlastingly, before I would ever admit the possibility of anything else, or cease to declare, to maintain, that I am your husband, and you are my wife —"

"John, John —"

"And more, much more! I humble myself, Abigail, before you, as I have never humbled myself before God or man. Forgive me, I wronged you, moved and instigated by that devil which is the fierce desire of man for his own advancement. I knew what I was doing, and I did it deliberately, just as I have known and done the other important things of my life, because I chose to do it, because to do it seemed well for me, for *me*. Now, I'm reaping the legitimate crop of selfishness, of ruthlessness. So be it; I don't complain — it is just.

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But you sha'n't be tainted by my sin; your fair name shall be kept as free from scandal as you yourself have ever been. I am your husband, and I'll stand by you, I'll protect you; by the living God, I will!"

A flush crept over Abigail Alice's withered face — the first, faint dawning of proud gratification amid the blank opacity of despair. "But, Adolph?" she hesitated. "He will do what he threatened. I know him — he is half-mad with love and hate, both unsatisfied. He will certainly proclaim far and wide that Paul is your son if you pardon him. And then, and then —"

"And then, I'll proclaim just as widely that that is the absolute truth. Why, I have no other excuse, not to say reason, for my action. But you heard what Adolph called him, you know what he believes —"

"He believes that Paul is illegitimate?"

"Yes, and you may rest assured that he will put the full stigma on him. Very well; then Paul must stand it as his share in his father's misdeeds. I am going to sacrifice, to ruin my career, my future for him. I am going to provide for his comfort, and, if possible, vindicate his character. There I stop. In the eyes of the law, the duty of father to son is relative; that of husband to wife is absolute. See — I burn this letter; the only record of his mother's story, her foolish, hysterical story, remember.

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Nothing remains of it now except the whisk of a black ash up the chimney. So let your fears wither and fly away, Abigail."

"You mean it? — you mean all you say?"

"As I live and breathe."

The flush, no longer struggling, but radiant, triumphant, transformed the woman's wan and peevish face into positive beauty.

"Then I, too, will make up, I, too, will atone," she cried. "Oh, I know, I realize, what a trial I have been for years to you; a half-sick, nerve-racked creature, tormented with jealousy. Why, even your success has been an agony to me; for it seemed that you kept advancing, while I remained stationary; and thus you were going further and further from me. But I've always been so proud, so proud of you, John. Proud to think that you had chosen me when other girls, so much prettier, so much brighter, were fairly wild over you. Proud to have people notice me, and make much of me, because I was the wife of so great a man. As I stood at that door and listened to-night (it's a poor wife that listens, John, but I did it, I've always done it) it seemed that I should die, and I hoped, I prayed, I might. I thought, I feared that you would take advantage of the exposure and repudiate me; I saw how happy, how blest I had been in at least being near you. My husband, my man, you'll not regret your good faith

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to me. You have given me my life, I'll keep it and hold it, for you, for you. Oh, of course, I understand that I can't amount to much; a beldam shivering in the chimney-corner, while you are out fighting the world. But I'll watch there, not glower there, my dear."

"Thank you for your renewed confidence, Abigail," said John Strain, after a pause, resuming that stiff benignity which became him as did his long black coat; "I must confess that I was somewhat concerned as to what might be your attitude during the storm of censure which will surely beat about me. Not only will my political friends and followers berate me for having jeopardized the success of the party, but I shall be universally condemned, even if I escape formal impeachment, for having pardoned Paul without a sufficient legal reason. The women will no longer envy you your position — the wife of a discredited man, forcing a desperate fight to prove the innocence of a murderer fairly tried, whom he has unfairly favored. Then there is Adolph — he has always been close to you; he may try —"

"Let him," rejoined Abigail with some of her former briskness. "I know a thing or two about Master Adolph already; I may learn a thing or two more. Do you know, John, now that I understand, I don't hate Paul any longer? It was an instinctive

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feeling I had that there was some bond between you I didn't share — something cattish, yes, that is the word, that made me spit and claw. Now, I am sorry for him, and I'm willing to believe he's innocent. Perhaps I may help you to prove him so when the time comes."

"When the time comes, you shall help, never fear, but now I want you to go to rest, for all this has been very hard for you. I must think about this very matter of Paul's rehabilitation; must forecast the succession of impending troubles, so that, whatever people say of me, they shall at least admit that I continue true to my reputation of being a resolute, strong, far-sighted man."

John Strain led his wife to the door with formal courtesy, then, to their mutual surprise, he bent low and kissed her. Having thus sealed his contrition, he sat before the dying embers on the hearth until their spark was swallowed up in the clear morning light. As years before, in the crude beginnings of his career, so now, in its inglorious conclusion, he still saw the path, opening before him, on which he should march to achievement. And when, at length, with the chart clearly defined in his mind, he started for his room to refresh and array himself for the ordeal of the day, there was the joy of strife, there was the joy of power, in his undaunted heart. As he opened the door, his wife lay on the sill, sleeping

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peacefully in the delight of at least being near him.

Again John Strain passed down the familiar street on his way to the Capital; but now he strode stern-faced, looking neither to right nor left, unheeding the greetings of neighbors, eager to congratulate him on the success of his speech of the night before, and on the greater success which so surely was coming to him. A crowd awaited at the station — men of his party, anxious for a handshake and a word with their candidate, incited by pride and self-interest to share in some small degree in his glory. But he waved them off, compelling a path through their midst by his determined and repellent mien.

For a while, the hush of astonishment and dismay prevailed; but, as the train moved out, there was a murmur instead of a cheer — the murmur of the mob, intolerant of what it does not understand, as quick to resent and to hate as it has been to flatter and follow. And John Strain smiled grimly as he took his seat apart, still wrapped in self-enforced exclusiveness, for he realized that, if there were one thing more fleeting than the breath of life, it was the popularity which made that breath precious to men.

He was weary of words, and disgusted with their ineffectiveness. He was yearning for the decisive-

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ness of action; and, though he chafed at each moment as a delay, he did not have to wait long.

He was hardly seated at his desk in the Executive chamber before his secretary came hurrying, all excitement and exultation, with two telegrams in his hand.

"Paul Breen is caught," he cried. "Here is a dispatch from Naylor, the private agency man, and one from the Chief of Police of Carteret in confirmation. Nothing could be better, just at this time. Why, sir —"

John Strain swung around in his chair. "That will do, Edwards," he said sharply. "I have my own opinion of its timeliness, and your reflections would not change it. Just send in the pardon clerk to me, and tell Joe and Jake, the State detectives, to wait without. That will do."

The private secretary went out, the pardon clerk came in, with a jump; for the very air was vibrant with the alarming intelligence that "the old man had the bit between his teeth for sure."

"Draft a full and unconditional pardon for Paul Breen and bring it to me at once," was the Governor's brief command.

"Sir, sir —" stammered the bewildered clerk.

"Draft a pardon for Paul Breen and bring it to me to sign with a rush," repeated the Governor

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blandly. "You really should do something, Markoe, for that incipient deafness of yours; it might cause a man less patient than myself to dispense with your valuable services."

With a rapidity which was really a triumph of penmanship the pardon lay letter-perfect on the Governor's desk. "Send Joe and Jake in here," he said, as he affixed his clear, angular signature to the broad parchment.

The two State detectives entered and awaited instructions, respectful, but disconsolate. "Oh, I understand what's the trouble with you," said the Governor; "but don't give up all hope of at least a share in the reward. That's all you're entitled to, for it's plain enough to me that this private-agency man and you must have worked together in some way. Besides, the Carteret people will have to have a piece of it, I suppose. But put in your claim, and I'll see that you don't suffer because I held you off last night. Meanwhile, take this pardon, show it to the Carteret authorities, get the necessary order, and have Paul Breen released forthwith from custody. Where are they holding him? Up in the mountains, hey, until they hear from me? That's good; just tell him to remain there quietly until his friends can communicate with him. Now, prove, will you, by promptness and efficiency in this matter, that you can be of some appreciable use?"

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After the men had hastened away, fired by unwonted zeal, the Governor sat apart and alone, in his nimbus of remoteness, not heeding the awed whispers, the frightened glances of the clerks, as they tip-toed to and fro as if participating in funereal preparations. Again he was impatient for the making of inexorable events. The extraordinary news must have radiated out from the Capital over the entire country by this time, by word of mouth, by telephone, by telegraph. But why didn't Adolph Breen act as he had threatened? Then, only then, could he send for the authorized representative of the press, and make the statement, so clearly defined in his mind, which should set him right, if not with the people, at least with his own conscience, and be his last word, of all the distasteful words, in the matter. Surely Adolph had not repented of his purpose. Ah, no; far more probably he was delaying to torment him; yes, that would be like Adolph.

The door of the private office opened unbidden, and then slammed like a challenge, as three men entered. They were the Hon. R. L. Armington, Chairman of the National Committee, as justly renowned for his skill as a lawyer as he was for his cunning as a politician; Mr. Rufus Rhodes, editor and proprietor of the "Metropolitan Ray," the party organ which spoke as one having authority, and Adolph Breen.

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John Strain rose to meet them, pale, cool and grim. He realized that Adolph was keeping his word, but after his own insidious, indirect fashion, forcing the full burden of explanation upon him, not through an orderly and dignified statement to the people, but as a part of an acrimonious dispute with those who had been his closest associates in politics and who naturally would be most incensed by his conduct. Very well; he would assume, he would accept it. Anything, everything, would be better than cursed uncertainty. He shook his head, slowly, defiantly, like an old bull, as he said: "Well, gentlemen, to what am I indebted for the honor of your coming?"

"If there's any honor in this room, it came in with us, that's sure," snapped Mr. Rufus Rhodes.

"We want to know what you mean by bedevilling the party that made you, at the eleventh hour?" demanded Mr. Carrington. "Not that it can make any difference what you say; your goose was cooked too thoroughly for retrieval when you signed that corrupt, that idiotic pardon. I've been long-distancing to all the members of the Committee since I heard the news; and they all agreed that your name won't be mentioned in the Convention, not mentioned, by the Lord Harry, any more than Benedict Arnold's. But Adolph here gives such an astonishing reason for your treachery that we felt

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it fair to give you the chance to confirm or deny it — "

"Mr. Adolph Breen is right in what he has told you," said the Governor quietly. "Paul Breen is my son."

"Your paternity hasn't troubled you much for the last twenty-five years," sneered Mr. Rufus Rhodes; "why didn't you keep mum for a little while longer, and give us a show? It was all a plant, I believe, a damned, disgraceful, larcenous plant!"

"I didn't know until last night," John Strain explained in the same dull, even tones. "I couldn't endure that my only son should be returned to the prison where my neglect, my severity, may have sent him in the first place."

"A miserable bastard," broke in Adolph Breen; "you see, gentlemen, how justified I am in my consistent, my conscientious abhorrence of the wretch who murdered my little cousin. I felt, I knew, that there could be no blood ties between us."

"You have violated your oath as Governor," continued Carrington, "and you may rest assured that the Legislature will take cognizance of it. Your feelings as a father; paf! What concern has the State with your feelings? You might just as well put your fingers in the public treasury, and then justify yourself by saying you felt hungry."

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"Let me add right here, out of justice to Paul," said John Strain with judicial composure, "that I am morally assured of his innocence —"

"Don't you see, gentlemen," interrupted Adolph in a tremble of rage, "don't you see that what I told you is true? He is already conspiring to take my lawful inheritance from me and give it to that side-blow of his. First the pardon, then a trumped-up vindication, then a suit to recover the estate of my honored uncle, Neil Breen, which is mine, by God, which he never intended, however crudely drawn his will, should go to his wife's living shame —"

"Calm yourself, Breen," Mr. Carrington advised. "If such a dastardly attempt is ever made, you'll find me at your side with all the poor legal ability I may possess —"

"Yes, and you can trust the 'Metropolitan Ray' to keep the people straight on the facts," Mr. Rufus Rhodes added.

John Strain resumed his seat, and touched a button on his desk. "Thomas," he said to the responding messenger, "just show these men out, and never let them in again;" and, a moment later, he was plodding through the stacks of official correspondence before him with the apathetic regularity and certainty of a machine.

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It was late, that afternoon, when John Strain left the Executive chambers. The clerks, lingering in the deep casements of the windows of the outer office, were so engrossed in conversation that they evidently did not perceive his departure. The corridors of the Capitol were strangely empty; for, during the last week, they had been thronged with sight-seers waiting for a glimpse of him. In his deliberate walk down the hill to the station, he was approached by no one, though, ordinarily, a petitioner for favor had lurked at every tree and corner. Now, those of his party whom he passed failed to recognize him, while men of the opposite faith gave him an amused, almost contemptuous nod. The newsboys danced around him, offering their wares most inopportunely, for their blazing headlines were neither flattering nor polite. Similarly, too, the bulletin-boards bristled with such injurious accusations that the crowds about them stared after him in dull amazement that any man so placarded could be so unmoved. But slight and insult fell off from John Strain's stubborn personality like bird-shot from the sides of an armor-clad. They were a part of the penalty he had undertaken to pay — a penalty he thoroughly understood before so undertaking. Why, then, should he concern himself because things were happening as he himself, of his own good judgment, had caused them to happen? A

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sensation, however annoying, might last for ten days, while deeds, deeds, they lived forever.

When the local train reached the outskirts of Hamlin, the conductor came with kindly suggestion. "You'd better let me pull up for you at Davenant Street crossing, Governor," he whispered; "that's only a stone-throw from your house. The boys were a little noisy and excited around the station, when I came by, an hour ago, disappointed naturally, you know, and they might — "

But John Strain waved him aside. "Nonsense," he said, "there is nothing so bad that it won't become worse if you fear to face it."

As he alighted from the train at Hamlin, the station-master, also, tried to detain him; but the Governor pushed on, with a smile. Outside, along the building, filling the street, was the mob, more turbulent, growling now where it had murmured in the morning. Again, through his forceful steadfastness, he passed into the midst of them, though now on every side was a swelling sea of cruel faces, of threatening arms, of rude weapons, brandished, ready to be cast. Already, one of the outstretched hands had clutched; already, one of the flying missiles had struck; when the mass ahead of him again parted, wider than before, and his wife, without hat or cloak, in the dingy old house-dress she had affected for years, darted to her husband's side.

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The mob laughed, and cheered, and then slunk away shamedly.

"Oh, I am so proud of you," she murmured, as she patted the strong, firm arm to which she clung.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE PARDON

THE following Sunday morning, the Governor sent bright and early for Phineas Twigg, and asked him what it was best to do with Paul. At the latter's suggestion, he telegraphed for Tancredi, who came within the hour.

While they were waiting, the old court Crier detailed, with minute particularity, the newly-discovered evidence to which he had referred on the night of the reception. But John Strain pursed his lip and shook his head as he finished.

"It all adds to our moral certainty," he said, "but there is still a woeful failure of proof of innocence. However, the note-book suggests two lines for research along which we must press. One is to find out what experiment Paul was trying at the time this alleged accident to him occurred; the other is to find out how and when this note-book left his possession. The first bit of information Paul himself ought to be able to supply through study of his notes; but, in order to learn the second, we must find the tramp who pawned the book."

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Tancredi, however, on arriving, vetoed sternly the idea of Paul's coöperation. "Just as I was getting my patient's mind," he declared, "in that state of tranquillity which precedes healthful action, it has been disarranged by these exciting events. It is very unfortunate. Even during Millicent's visit to the Cottage, I detected a recurrence to that state of lethargy which, when once chronic, is so hard to combat, and now — now I look for serious retrogression. I want Paul to be interested, of course, but it should be in impersonal matters. Nothing that will cause him to brood, nothing that will impress him with his own mental defects, should come to his notice. For this reason I would keep from him the news of his true parentage, just as I would hide the vital importance of his regaining his memory. He should be occupied and diverted; not disturbed or forced."

"Then what do you suggest?" John Strain asked.

"I suggest that I take him back with me to my college rooms for the rest of this vacation. He is accustomed to being there, it is now very quiet and retired, and he and I are the best of friends. By the opening of the fall term, he might be able not only to depend on himself but to help himself."

"Very good," said the Governor. "You go ahead with your ideas and I'll back you in any way and to

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any extent. By the way, though, I wouldn't mind looking him over myself, from a professional point of view. I want to determine just how far it would be advisable to use him as a witness in this problematical litigation of ours. Would there be any harm in bringing him here for a friendly call?"

"No, indeed," returned Tancredi. "It would seem proper that he should thank the Governor who pardoned him, and the call might do him good. We will come, if agreeable, in two weeks. But meanwhile he should see no one except myself, he should learn only what I judge is beneficial, or at least not harmful, for him to know."

Tancredi hastened to return to Tip-top Cottage. He found Paul, as he had apprehended, in a state of indifference to everything that went on about him, while joined to it was a gentleness that was captivating, and a slowness of speech that was pathetic. He showed warmth, however, in his greeting, and a certain understanding of his own needs.

"I am glad you are going to take me back again for a while," he said. "I feel a confidence in you that I feel for no one else; and I feel, too, that you have brought me good luck. It will not be very long, I hope, before I shall be what I once was — and what, I know well, I am not now. There are holes — I once knew the Latin for it. Let me think, — is it lacunae?"

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"Yes, that is the word," Tancredi answered.

"Queer, isn't it," Paul went on, "that I recall out-of-the-way things like that, and yet that I grope in my mind for the facts — "

"Come, come, no more of that. As your physician I must interdict that topic."

"Oh, you needn't worry," Paul replied smiling, "it does not excite me. It seems as if nothing could excite me. The Paul Breen who was convicted — "

"If you disobey your physician," Tancredi again interrupted, "how can he cure you? Time enough for all that later. Come, let us pack your things, as we will just have time to catch the noon train."

Paul became more vivacious as the noon train, which happened to be one of the fastest limited expresses, began to attain its high speed. His eye brightened, and a faint color came into his cheeks.

"You look better already," Tancredi said.

"It isn't only looking better," Paul replied, "but I am clearer-headed. There is something in the rattle — the vibration of the train that seems to clarify my mind. I can think rapidly and talk without hesitation. I used to have an idea — do you know? — that all life, all intelligence, was a form of vibratory action, not mechanical, of course, and yet influenced in some degree by mechanical agita-

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tion. The deaf often hear better, don't they, when some din has aroused the auditory nerve? So it is with my brain. It needs shaking up in more senses than one, Professor."

Paul laughed as he said this, and Tancredi listened in amazement. Was this not a chance reference to the experiments outlined in the note-book? Dare he stimulate the memory by questions, or was it not better, as he had already determined, to trust to the gradual and natural association of ideas? Paul caught his intent glance, and replied to it at once.

"Oh, my notion is not so absurd as it may appear," he went on, half-jokingly. "Let us suppose that my brain is not twisted, but only muffled in some strange fashion — certain centres deadened, and therefore not responsive. If this had been caused by shock, might it not be cured by shock? Oh, if there were any way — "

"You have so many pleasant things to anticipate," said Tancredi, choosing the more prudent part, "that it hardly seems worth while to bother with abstractions until your health is fully restored. I may even say that this is your first duty — remember the faithful friends who still are so anxious about you — remember Constance Sanderson — "

"I do remember her very well, indeed," said Paul coolly. "She was always kind and agreeable to

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me. I think we corresponded for a while. I really was fond of her once."

Fond of her once! Again Tancredi looked at Paul in wonder, but now the face of his patient remained calm, undisturbed, irresponsive. He was leaning back in the seat, gazing out of the window with an expression absolutely placid. Tancredi was unreasonably provoked. He recalled the rapturous longing in Constance's eyes as, only the day before, they had talked together over the hopes of the future; and now that lover, so idealized, so adored, was saying apathetically that he had been "fond of her once." He exclaimed hastily, and without realizing how foolish he was:

"Why, Paul, you are engaged to her; and she has been breaking her heart over you."

"Oh, I guess not," returned Paul. "I don't think she cared particularly about me. Some boy and girl nonsense, perhaps; but no harm done on either side, Professor. You'll see it will be all right."

And Paul changed the subject, speaking with keen appreciation of the view from the car-window, while Tancredi, sick at heart when he thought of Constance, was depressed by this fresh proof of how impenetrable Paul's mind was in certain directions. This instance made him all the more positive that the time was not yet ripe for tests of so sensi-

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tive an organ, and he confined his remarks to the practical present, finding his companion both intelligent and congenial.

When Paul was once more in Tancredi's rooms the poor fellow gave a deep sigh of relief. He sank into an easy chair and, picking up a book from the table, held it affectionately in his hands as if he loved it.

"Here, Professor," said Paul, with enthusiasm, but speaking with less animation than he had shown on the train, "here is the true friend of mankind. Give me for a friend a good book. Always ready with counsel or with merriment, as one's mood demands; silent or talkative at will; the magic link that binds the present and the past, the solace that fails not. When I am forgetful of the blessing of books, may I forget my alphabet."

Tancredi filled his favorite pipe; and, when the smoke was curling confidentially toward the ceiling, replied to Paul's eulogium.

"I am as fond of a book as old Grolier himself," he agreed; "but just now I am in the mood to say a word for woman, lovely woman. It is only two days, you must know, since I have become engaged to be married."

"I am very glad," Paul responded warmly, "and I wish you every happiness. "Some rich heiress, I hope?"

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"No, I am going to marry Miss Twigg, Millicent Twigg. Funny name, isn't it?"

"Oh, I know," Paul cried, "that is the pretty, black-eyed girl who was so excited about something or other the day of the storm on the mountains. Well, it is a pity she is not rich. 'Don't ye marry for money, but go where money is,' saith the poet. Life is full of troubles, and money is a most convenient medium of exchange, as Jevons puts it. Still, it may be you don't need it. I do. I should hate to be tempted by a mercenary match — I fear I should be inflammable. I am ambitious, or was, and I used to have a taste for pure science. And that costs money."

Now that he was once more under Tancredi's wing, Paul seemed entirely at ease. He showed little concern about his future, and none at all for current events; obeying implicitly the injunctions of his physician. He read voraciously, and apparently with a keen understanding, choosing scientific works to the exclusion of all else.

Tancredi was thus enabled to devote some attention to the new complication added to his responsibilities, and, at the first opportunity, he went to Hamlin to prepare Constance for the change in her lover. He had persuaded her previously that it would be well that a few days should elapse before she saw Paul. His reason had been his hope that

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Paul would be better able then to bear the excitement of meeting her. He was now glad of this for precisely the opposite reason — he hoped that she would be better prepared for his apathy toward her. He tried, therefore, to lay the foundation for some great change; but Constance persisted in misunderstanding him, believing that he referred to a physical change, a loss of health, and assuring him that it would make no difference. He was forced at last to confide in Millicent, and to beg for her advice.

"Paul Breen," Tancredi explained, "speaks of Constance as of a schoolboy's sweetheart. He evidently never thinks of her except when I mention her name. What shall I do, dear? What can we do to prepare her?"

"We cannot prepare her," Millicent answered; "there are some vagaries of the masculine mind that the feminine mind is absolutely incapable of comprehending. Of course, he is not himself — but how can he forget, while he knows enough to breathe, her devotion to him? At all events, you cannot keep them apart longer, or Constance will follow my wicked example and go to Carteret herself. Cannot you contrive that their first meeting shall be one where it would be natural for them to be somewhat reserved?"

"Why, I think so," Tancredi answered. "I am going to bring Paul to town to call on Governor

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Strain and express his acknowledgments. Constance and you might be at the station and go with us."

"I think that will be the best possible plan," Millicent reflected. "Of course, Constance is not on speaking terms with Mrs. Strain, but this will be in the nature of an official call on the Governor, to whom I know she wishes to show her gratitude. Besides, if she thinks it is Paul's wish, she will put aside any petty feelings. Paul will naturally be somewhat absorbed by the thought of what he is going to say to the Governor, and so Constance may have time to divine gradually the change in him. If it came to her all at once I fear it would break her heart. Oh, dear, how happy we ought to be that no one is making such plans about us."

This project was carried out to the letter. Paul arrived with Tancredi, delighted with the little journey, and prepared to greet Constance as one who had stood by him faithfully in his time of distress. His greeting of her was cordial and gay, and though Constance was surprised and a little chilled, yet through the joint efforts of Tancredi and Millicent, reinforced by the pleadings of her own heart, she was led to ascribe his lack of demonstrativeness to their being in the company of others, to a sense of strangeness, and to his interest in the visit to the Governor.

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Besides, the walk to the Governor's house gave Paul time to feel the unconscious charm of Constance's affection, evidenced as it was by every glance and tone; and he soon showed by his attitude that he was attracted strongly to her. It was as if their courtship were beginning anew; and Tancredi and Millicent began to hope that a new love might spring up in Paul's heart before Constance had learned the loss of the old one.

The Governor was at home, and received them in the library. Paul bore himself with great dignity, and showed a fitting gratitude to the man who had pardoned him. As he alone was ignorant of his relationship to Strain, so, he, alone, of the little company, was not embarrassed and troubled by the thought of it. Perhaps the influence of Constance's faith was with him, even if the memory of it was not; for he seemed anxious to justify himself.

"My obligation to you, Governor," he declared, "is not lessened by the assurance in my own mind that I have never been a guilty man. I don't know what I did do — that is my appalling misfortune. But I do know what I didn't do — and that has been and is my consolation. This hand, which I dare stretch out to you, is as free as yours from guilt."

The Governor seemed strangely moved. For a moment he hesitated, for a moment he could not

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command his voice. Then he seized Paul's hand in both his own.

"Paul," he said, "I have done you a great wrong, a greater wrong than you know. A portion of that wrong I have undone; and, by the grace of God, I will make your innocence manifest in atonement for the rest. Trust in me, my boy — I cannot say more, now. But you may count on me as devoted to your service, heart and soul."

Paul looked bewildered by these impassioned words, and drew back restrainedly. An awkward silence ensued until the others by a united effort forced the current of conversation into brighter channels, where it remained until the call was over.

They passed down the broad corridor toward the door; the two girls in advance, the young men following. At the stairway an elderly woman, whose narrow face was still more drawn by anxiety, caught Constance by the arm with utter disregard of the others. It was Mrs. Strain.

"Oh, Constance, dear Constance," she cried; "won't you forgive me for my unjust, my cruel treatment? I do so need you at this vital time. Tell me, dear, is Paul coming here to live; and won't you use the sweet persuasion of your love to induce him to feel kindly toward me and to — "

"Hush!" warned Constance with expressive finger.

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But the mischief was done. With one of those sudden impulses so characteristic of a mind not normal, Paul wheeled sharply around and marched back to the library. Tancredi followed him, while the girls accompanied Mrs. Strain to her room, calming her with loving words.

"I am surrounded by mysteries," exclaimed Paul, as he again faced the Governor, "and I won't endure it longer. What did you mean, sir, by saying that you had wronged me greatly? You were a sworn officer of the law; it was your duty to prosecute me. I never blamed you for doing so. What did Mrs. Strain mean, too, just now, when she asked whether I was going to live in this house? Why should I live where I was never very welcome? Why should she wish me to feel kindly toward her, when I know I never was a favorite with her? Why should she appeal to Miss Sanderson for the influence of her love? I won't stand it, I say. I am groping in the darkness and you are all conspiring together to keep me from the light."

Tancredi looked anxiously into his patient's face, and then nodded gravely to the Governor.

"Be calm, Paul, I beseech you," said John Strain, paling under the effort for self-control. "We are all your friends, we are all seeking for the best way in which to serve you. There are mysteries about you, but you shall know them all. Not from me;

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that might not be seemly; but from Professor Tancredi here, at once your faithful friend and your skilful physician. Go, then, with him; and have faith that in time all will be well."

They passed again through the broad corridor, and then down the winding stairs. At the portico the girls were waiting, and the four walked through the streets to Phineas Twigg's house. But no longer did Millicent and Tancredi exchange sly glances of hope; no longer did Paul thrill with the faint recognition of something inexpressibly dear to him. He was wrapped in moody silence; he was distracted by wild and conflicting thoughts; and, when at length they separated, the young men returning to the station, Constance's face wore a deeper resignation than it ever before had known.

"Oh, I could just shake him," murmured Millicent, as she watched her friend's weary steps up the stairs.

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CHAPTER XXVII

PREPARING FOR THE STRUGGLE

PAUL BREEN listened to Tancredi's revelations without question or other interruption. For an hour afterward he sat apart in silent thought. Then he rejoined his comrade, evidently striving to act as if nothing out of the usual had happened. But to Tancredi's keen eye he had changed; and this change had its inception in the moment, when, of his own accord, he had started back, in Strain's house, to demand an explanation of the Governor. In a word, he had become less dependent; and, whether he was hopeful or despondent of the future, had determined to act for himself. He wrote briefly, but not unfeelingly, to his father; and Strain replied, insisting on providing for his needs and comforts and renewing his promise of ultimate vindication. Being thus enabled to follow out his own tastes, Paul began to take occasional trips to Hamlin, with a view of finding lodgings, secluded yet convenient, where he might establish himself. Tancredi encouraged these visits, as he hoped they might lead to a closer inti-

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macy with those who had Paul's well-being so much at heart.

But feelings of delicacy, a shrinking from the personal explanations of his father, a dread, especially, of Mrs. Strain's probable attitude toward him, kept him from visiting the Strains' house. Nor, as would seem more natural, did he frequent the court-crier's humble home. He was embarrassed by the unreserve and frankness of Constance's manner to him. Her glances, her casual references, her whispered confidences and intimate inquiries, all seemed predicated upon a community of interest which he could not understand and would not admit. Why, when his individuality had never been so insistent in its demands; why, when he was becoming more and more convinced of his own supreme isolation, should she simulate a relationship without warrant in past or present?

On returning thus, once and again, to Hamlin, Paul came to perceive that popular opinion was hostile to him. The acquaintances of former days now avoided him; strangers, who ordinarily would not have observed his passing, now followed him with sour glance and caustic comment. His pardon had enlarged, but not destroyed, his imprisonment. He could take a few steps more this way or that; but, in the end, he ran against the blank wall of prejudice.

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One day Paul encountered Adolph, sauntering along with three friends whom he himself had known. Involuntarily he stopped and put out his hand. "Adolph," he said, "it seems like old times to see you. I forget the harshness of your judgment; I only remember when we were boys together —"

"Hear the fellow," cried Adolph scornfully to his friends, "of course he is anxious to forget, I should think he would be!"

"But Adolph, I was pardoned; a pardon restores —"

"Oh, does it? Well, try it on, then. Here are three representative citizens who have no unpleasant recollection of you. Ask them what they think of your rehabilitation."

Paul looked piteously at the three young men.

"The circumstances of its granting were so extraordinary —" began one.

"And really, you know, it was such a peculiarly atrocious crime —" added another.

"Why not let well enough alone?" asked the third.

Paul watched the malice kindle and glow and leap triumphantly in Adolph's eyes; and he turned away sadly. Yes, he was still a prisoner, serving for life; cut off from human sympathy, despised and rejected of men. Tancredi was an exception, an

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anomaly; besides, term-time would soon begin, and then he would be a busy man, absorbed in his profession and harnessed to the tread-mill of routine. Where else, then, did he have, or had he ever had, a friend? Friendship showed itself in deeds, not words; who else was there, or ever had there been, to do a kindly, unselfish act for him? As Paul bitterly asked himself these questions, their answer came in a flash of contrition and shame. What right had he to expect or to complain, when he himself had been so neglectful? What had he done for Soci'ty Dan? How much even had he thought of him? — and yet this man, uncultured, unprincipled, in his rude way had been true to the faith of him who layeth down his life for a friend.

Paul wrote to Soci'ty Dan, supplementing grateful words with a box of those comestibles which experience had taught him were most highly prized in prison. In the course of a month, a reasonable time for convict correspondence, an answer was returned; and with it revived the old, hopeless agony, as from cramped, painful writing, sticky ink and coarse paper, he seemed to catch the fetid essence which for endless aeons had lingered on his lips, saturated his flesh and corrupted his entire being.

And yet, Paul smiled as he read; for, twinkling through the vulgar medium, shone the shrewd, droll eyes of Soci'ty Dan. "The stuff kem to hand, all

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right — bot' hands, I may say," the letter began. Ah, Soci'ty would have his joke; it was the magic wand with which he held off the wretchedness of fate. "The nex' time," the letter continued, "please send more milk and fewer eggs. Them condensed slugs is as good as gold for tradun; while eggs foller the gin'ral rule, and the longer they're kep' in the cooler, the wuss they git." There was the mercenary instinct, surely enough, ever intent on future benefits; yet, why shouldn't it be more excusable in prison, where it was stimulated by hardship, than in the outer world where it throve on luxury, and grew more arrogant with increase?

Poor Soci'ty, thought Paul, as he laid down the bethumbed and blotted missive; a meagre result for the strain of hand and arm, and the twist of mouth and brows it had cost. Then his eye caught a small "p. s.," set in a scroll in the lower right-hand corner; and, turning the page, he read as follows:

"I was woolin' over your case, the odder night, and remimbered thet I never tole you how the young gal I met at the freight-car gev' me a little silver-bound book, which I put up the spout in the shop where I was pinched. Be the same token, I junked it in the name she was sportun, 'Ed Flyaway,' I t'ink. Now, don't you see the Gov'nor wudn't take me wud, — and I wudn't eeder for thet matter, —

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but, if you kin show thet the book b'longed to her or to some of her people, and the name was wan she uster use, why it comes dam near squarin' all I said. P'raps you wonder why I didn't tell this afore. Well, mebbe I didn't like you to know thet I had worked the poor kid outer all she was wuth; mebbe I cudn't git over the habit us lags all hev' of never tellin' all we knows. At all ewents, I seen fit to keep it dark."

Paul read these words over and over again, at first dully, perfunctorily, so vividly did the days come back when he had eaten out his heart with the suspense of waiting for an answer to his petition. Then, slowly, gradually, the direct bearings of these additional facts became apparent to him. Yes, Soci'ty was right; in a sense, to a degree, they were corroborative; perhaps, had they been placed before the Governor at the time, he might have decided differently. Perhaps, if they were placed before him now, they might supply that lack of proof which seemed to be paralyzing his efforts. Here at length was something tangible; here was truth, unsmirched by prison grime. As Paul Breen decided, there was an unusual glow in his white, set face, the reflection, perhaps, of the first gleam of hope in the darkness which had so long surrounded him.

"I have followed out your advice," he said to Tancredi at the first opportunity, "and have re-

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frained from examining my old note-book, which you have; but now I want it."

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Tancredi anxiously.

"I don't know yet. I am going to take it to my father with these new facts, and see what he has to say."

"Very well; here it is," the Professor agreed, "but I warn you that you are not yet mentally strong enough to make an exhaustive study of it."

Meanwhile, the popular outburst through which John Strain, with the help of his wife, had passed unscathed, had proved a mere flash in the pan. By the very next day, the indignation had dwindled into a sort of contemptuous indifference. Mr. Carrington's views were generally accepted; the Governor was done for, a shade of his former, forceful self, hardly darkening the chair in which the law permitted him to sit for a number of months yet, and certain to disappear from all reckoning when his term should expire. The National Convention met, and, as is usual in a country where average prevails, honored mediocrity with its choice. Strain's name was not even mentioned. Among his political supporters he was already dead, and there was not fragrance enough to his memory to divert the self-seeking thoughts of any of them for an instant.

John Strain bore his sudden occultation com-

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posedly; gaining coolness from the shade. Like all the dead, he found that he had more time to himself; and this time he now devoted to Paul. With his trained, dogged purpose never to leave one thing undone, and to do each thing in its order thoroughly and completely, he went over the case step by step from the very beginning, employing men who were detectives in deeds not in name to test and verify every detail. The result was disappointing. As a lawyer, had he the case for the people to try over again, he would be just as certain of conviction; just as positive in that event that the right had prevailed. As a Governor, had he Paul's application again before him, with the affidavit of Soci'ty Dan, he would deny the one as a matter of course, repudiating the other as not worthy the consideration of a decent man. The newly discovered evidence on which Phineas Twigg and Constance had counted so much was fragmentary and disjointed; links were missing, and, until they were supplied, the suspicions against Adolph would remain suspicions, and the pawning of the notebook would continue to be a mystery unsolved.

These suspicions against Adolph, however, became more and more well-founded in the Governor's mind. Mrs. Strain, dragging out from her retentive memory a little incident here, an unimportant happening there, had made Adolph's ma-

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lignity and complicity a condition precedent to the whole trouble. But, since there was no legal evidence to prove it, of what avail was the assurance? Of this much, at least. It convinced him that there was no truth in the story that Paul had been under the influence of opium on that fatal morning, and this compelled him logically to the conclusion that the young man must have been doing something which had resulted in a shock and consequent impairment of memory. What then was this thing, and how could it be shown; since the only one who knew its purpose could not remember? A startling thought flashed out from and over John Strain's fertile mind, unaccepted, but not rejected, and filed away for possible consideration, should the issue arise when a desperate remedy might be a prudent one.

From such musings as these John Strain was roused, one evening, by the unexpected entrance of his son. "Ah, my boy," he cried, with that unaccustomed softness which the thought or sight of Paul seemed to impart to his heart, "have you come to your home?"

"No," Paul answered decidedly. "I have come on a business visit to my lawyer."

"Whatever the motive, you are very welcome."

"I am very unhappy," cried Paul passionately. "I can't stand this delay. Do you know what peo-

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ple think? They regard me as a lucky criminal, unwhipped of Justice. You did me a wrong, sir, a grievous wrong, when you issued that pardon! It is vindication I want, not freedom. Is a pariah any the happier for being unbound? I tell you I was better off in prison; at least I was entitled to privacy there; while you have exposed me to public scorn —"

"Paul, you must be patient," said John Strain, almost entreatingly; "the law is slow, but it is as sure as human endeavor can be. Remember, it was the work of months to convict you; so, too, it will take time, a weary time, I admit, to establish your innocence. It is a difficult case, with all the known facts against you, and only inferences in your favor. You, yourself, have the solution, locked up somewhere in your mind; but you can't find the key. Don't you see how little else there is, and how unavailable this little is? Do you suppose, for instance, that any court of law would listen seriously to the testimony of the man whose affidavit you sent me, a notorious offender, disqualified, outlawed, prejudiced, too, in your favor, your companion in flight, which was itself a major in offence — do you think that his word, without corroboration —"

"Ah, but I have corroboration;" and, all of a tremble, Paul read the postscript to Soci'ty's letter.

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"Where is that note-book; have you got it?" Strain demanded.

"Yes; here it is."

"Ah, the book that I have heard so much about — well, what can you recall regarding it?"

"I remember," replied Paul slowly, straining evidently every vital power, "I remember I used to make notes in it about some work I was doing — yes, some work in which I was deeply interested — "

"When did you see it last?"

"I saw it last, let me see — why, I saw it last the morning I was hurt."

"You were hurt?"

"Yes, I know I was — I think I was — hurt."

"What were you doing when you were hurt?"

"I don't know. It is all black — utter darkness, without a hope of seeing or even feeling my way."

"This book seems to be filled with a sort of cipher. Can you read it?"

"I think I can."

"Can you do what it says?"

"I think so, with the things before me."

"What things?"

"I don't know."

"You haven't tried, have you, to do either the one or the other?"

"No; but I will;" and Paul stretched out his hand eagerly.

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"Oh, no, you won't; at least not now," replied John Strain decisively, as he sealed the book and locked it in his desk. "There may come a time — but, if so, you mustn't until then know more than you do at present."

"I will do anything, everything, you say or suggest," Paul went on, still wan and shaken from his mental stress. "I'll risk my life — I'll give my life, if only the world may admit my innocence."

"It may come to that, young man;" and, then, as if regretting what he said, as if forcing the subject from further discussion, John Strain continued in his abrupt, forceful way: "This letter you bring, Paul, sets the ball a-rolling. To-morrow, I begin an action in ejectment against Adolph Breen for the recovery of the Oriole Farm, a piece of land in this county of which Neil Breen died seized. After your conviction, Philip Breen took title by probate of heirship, and now Adolph inherits by descent from his father."

"Ejectment?" Paul repeated timidly; "I don't see what that has to do with me."

"It has everything to do, my boy. We may start a long way off in the law, but we arrive at the precise point of issue. It is very much like an argument in which finally one of the disputants asserts a naked fact, and the other flatly denies it. For instance," Strain went on, trying to state the case

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in the simplest form, "we say, 'Give us that land, it belongs to Paul Breen, since Edith died unmarried, during her minority.' They say, 'No, we won't; here's the record showing that Paul was convicted of murdering the girl, and a man can't have advantage from his own wrong.' We say, 'Yes, you will; here is Paul's full and unconditional pardon.' They say, 'He killed her, notwithstanding.' We say, 'He did not;' and there you are."

"But what proof will you have? Didn't you say that Soci'ty is disqualified from testifying?"

John Strain laughed the short laugh of one who both sees and defies the consequences. "That is one of the advantages of being Governor," he explained, his chin tilted up with power. "They think I'm a dead duck, do they? Well, I'll give them a twist before I leave office. I'll pardon and restore to citizenship this man, Soci'ty, as you call him. Oh, I know what I'll be up against. I've shut off that rot about impeachment by giving out that you had made an application for pardon, some time before, which I denied but afterward considered. But now, well, my conduct will be flagrant beyond explanation or condonation; they'll have my hide sure, my boy, unless I succeed. We'll be in the same boat together; and your good name and my good name will depend on the one cause. It will be a tough,

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up-hill fight, against awful odds. Soci'ty at best will be but a feeble reed, and oh, just won't he be shaken by the wind! If our case is stronger, so will be theirs, you may confidently believe; Adolph Breen is not the man to risk losing his all for the lack of a little thing like perjury. 'But it's dogged as does it,' as the poor parson in 'The Last Chronicles of Barset' says; and John Strain is as hard to beat as that other fellow in 'Put Yourself in His Place.'"

"What do you mean by that, John?" asked Mrs. Strain, who had noiselessly entered just in time to hear the last words. "Put Paul in his place — what is Paul's place?" And her withered face was distorted by suspicion and alarm.

"Madam, I have no recognized place," said Paul simply.

"Yes, but suppose that you did have one, an honored one, by right? Suppose I was the outcast — not you, not you?"

"Abigail, mother," John Strain exclaimed, "you don't think what you are saying!"

"Ah, madam," Paul replied, "that is an impossible, an inconceivable supposition; and, if it were not, it would be at once my duty and my privilege to make it so."

At last Abigail Alice's tormented mind was at rest. With father and son on her side, what had she

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to fear? Peace wiped the distress from her face, and she smiled.

"You are a high-minded, noble young man," she declared, "and God will surely prosper you. John Strain, if you never do anything else in your life, prove Paul's innocence. I don't care if it takes every cent we have; it must, it shall be done. Oh, I never can cease from blaming myself for having encouraged Adolph in the bitter hatred which, I suspect, is at the bottom of all this wrong."

"That is one of the many things I cannot understand," Paul said reflectively, as if talking to himself. "Adolph and I were always good friends. Why, then, did he plot against me, as you all seem to agree he did?"

"He was after the money, my boy," John Strain explained.

"Why, it is his and willingly for all of me. You don't suppose that I would inherit under false pretences, do you? He might have felt chagrined when Edith's death seemed to give it all to me; but if he had only waited, why, I should have divided with him. And now — when every one knows that I am not Neil Breen's son, can he think for one moment —"

"Hold on there," the Governor interrupted with true legal caution; "time enough to give your property away when you've got it; possession lends a

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different aspect to dreams of generosity, I assure you. Besides, there can be no question of false pretences in your inheritance. I know, I know positively, that Neil Breen, when he made his will, was aware that you were not his son. I think he must have promised Mar— his wife, I mean, to give you some sort of a reversionary interest."

"And it isn't the money alone that incites Adolph," added Mrs. Strain. "It's Constance Sanderson."

"There it is again," Paul sighed in his remote, meditative mood. "Why should my pleasant relations with Constance enrage him? We have all been good comrades together for years, with never a thought on my part as to which one might like the other better. She is a sort of a sister to us both, I should say —"

"Alas, you poor boy!" murmured Mrs. Strain.

John Strain's estimate of the effects of Soci'ty Dan's pardon proved to be judicially moderate. When the event occurred, immediately after the joinder of issue in the sensational ejectment suit of Breen versus Breen, the popular furor against him revived, stimulated by the artful philippics of the "Metropolitan Ray" and the many other papers that reflected its sinister light. Not only had this man Strain abused the prerogative of his high office,

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but he was conspiring criminally with criminals to divert an honored inheritance and ruin that representative young citizen, Adolph Breen. The few of his former associates who remained on speaking terms with him advised him that his only hope of success lay in a change of venue; but they disturbed not a whit his plans for the campaign. He had crossed the river of decision; he was on the march, chariot and foot. A change of venue? It was a change of opinion that the case demanded; and that he was about to compel!

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CHAPTER · XXVIII

THE CASE AT ISSUE

THE apathetic clerk was calling the calendar, the names falling from his lips without more meaning to him than if they were the figures of the multiplication-table. Yet each title met with its own response; each coupling of parties was the key-note to some long comedy or tragedy, some farce or mystery. Tancredi, as he sat in the little group clustered about Paul Breen, mused on the singular contrast between the demeanor of those to whom the court-room was a place of monotonous toil — the judge, the lawyers, the attendants — and those to whom it was the arena wherein were fought out the battles on which all depended, whether life, honor or fortune was the stake. To how many was this dingy room the parting of the ways, from which diverged paths of glory or of ruin. By a singular connection of ideas, Tancredi was reminded of a day he had passed in the Treasury at Washington, where he saw men handling with indifference blocks of metal and bits of printed paper that, outside that magic

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realm, became the root of all evil. So, here, he sat watching the men who operated the mighty machinery of the law as if its terrible potentialities were but a dream of fiction. From such fanciful musings he was recalled by the names that touched him to the quick:

"Breen vs. Breen."

John Strain rose in his place, and, with a slight bow to the bench, said, in a conversational tone:

"We are ready, if your Honor please. I appear for the plaintiff, Paul Breen."

Mr. Carrington, who sat a few feet away, also rose.

"We are ready for the defendant," he added.

Then began a brief discussion between judge and lawyers of which Tancredi could gather only the general purport. He understood that Mr. Strain was maintaining that the trial would require at least one day; while Mr. Carrington, Adolph's counsel, was equally as confident that it could be settled in a few hours. The judge listened with a wandering eye, but with an attentive brain, and apparently inclined to Strain's view, for he soon directed a court-officer to proclaim that all who were unconnected with "Breen vs. Breen" might depart until further notice. Then, with a shuffling of feet, the exiled litigants, lawyers and witnesses filed out; and those who were to contest the issue in "Breen vs. Breen"

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made themselves at home by a choosing of the vacated places.

John Strain and his legal adversary seemed suddenly to become of new importance, for they glanced over their respective forces as generals upon a battlefield might view the disposition of their squadrons and battalions. Each had chosen a part of the long table that paralleled the front of the Judge's desk, and was untying bundles of papers, and adjusting them as if they were the weapons to be caught up in an instant and used for parry or for thrust — and so, indeed, they were. The jury, having been caught and caged, stood up to be sworn, and then subsided again, relieved, yet fearful that they might not be able to follow the expected proceedings.

All this was but the marshalling of the lists, and in no wise lessened the suspense of the parties to the trial. Adolph Breen, though he had tipped back his chair with an air of indifference, and was scribbling meaningless scrawls on a scrap of paper, yet watched his former partner, John Strain, with an intensity of interest he could not disguise. Paul seemed at ease and the least excited of any in the room. John Strain wore an impassive look; but there was a new calmness, an inevitableness in his actions that marked the advocate whose soul is in his cause. Mr. Carrington, with a veteran's disci-

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pline, showed an assurance that brought to Tancredi a sickening fear of defeat.

Then came a pause. The rustling of papers ceased. Every whisper was hushed. The judge leaned slightly toward Strain, and smiled permission to begin. That eminent counsel, thereupon, rose and made his opening without agitation and in the same low tone he had used in answering the call of the case. He spoke slowly, simply, but with evident care in the choice of his words.

"May it please the Court; Gentlemen of the Jury," he began in formal parlance. "This is, according to the pleadings, a suit in ejectment. My client, Paul Breen, as plaintiff claims title to a certain property now in possession of Adolph Breen, the defendant. This property, the Oriole Farm, is part of the estate of which the late Neil Breen died seized, and with the rest was devised by him by means of a will to two members of his household, Edith Breen and Paul Breen. The will, duly proved, gave the use of the property jointly to these two children during their minority. There was a clause providing that, in case of Edith's death, unmarried, during her minority, Paul was to inherit the whole estate. Edith Breen did die, unmarried, when about fifteen years of age; and my client, Paul Breen, still surviving and here present, claims the said estate under the terms of said will.

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"I offer in evidence a certified copy of the will of Neil Breen, and the record of its probate."

John Strain handed the papers to the clerk of the Court, and then turned to Mr. Carrington.

"There is no dispute as to the death of Edith Breen, unmarried and before her majority?" he asked.

"It is or should be admitted in our answer," was the reply.

"Then," said Strain, quietly seating himself, "that is our case, and we ask judgment."

Mr. Carrington arose in turn, and, after the usual complimentary phrases to court and jury, made the equally conventional motions to dismiss the complaint, received the judge's denial with the usual remark, "I take an exception, if your Honor please," and then proceeded to the solid matter of his defence.

"Your Honor and Gentlemen of the Jury," he said, with a deepening of tone, and a severity of expression that at once warned his hearers of the real beginning of the grapple that would result in the overthrow of one side or the other; "behind the courteous phrases of the law lie the malign passions of human nature. The legal fiction that would make the Temple of Justice a cold, calm and dispassionate tribunal requires that we should admit the formal truth of the case presented by my learned

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friend. We do not, therefore, deny the will of Neil Breen, nor dispute its terms. We admit that before Edith Breen had married, or indeed come to her maturity of womanhood, she had ceased to live. But, under the guise of truth, we shall unmask to you the hideous form of murder; and, in him who presents himself in the attractive part of a wronged plaintiff, we shall reveal to you the bloody-handed murderer whose malice, whose deadly avarice, has struck down the sister in her young maidenhood that he might gain the property which her father, by solemn instrument and for the very best of reasons, had provided should be hers. And this villainous claimant has not even the grace of hypocrisy. He comes before you without even so much confidence as might rest upon a crime concealed within his own conscience. He comes to you branded a murderer by the hand of avenging Justice; and yet dares demand in her very presence the fruits of his crime.

"Such is the felon, Paul Breen. It staggers human credulity that there should be found effrontery so terrible, indifference so callous. The ministers of the law, however, have learned of what degradation humanity is capable; they have been taught, in defending the right against the powers of evil, that there are no depths to which the vicious may not descend in attempting to carry out their

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devilish purposes. And, so, the law has provided against even the depravity that would make of foul murder a stepping-stone to wealth. The law, gentlemen, has decreed that the criminal shall not profit by his crime. The law declares that, whoever may enjoy the property of the dead, it shall not be held by the ensanguined hand that is red with the blood of its former owner.

"The law, gentlemen? There is a higher law than that of precedents, of statutes, of codes, of treatises. There is the law of the human soul — the law that underlies and creates all others; and this law is God-implanted in our very hearts, needing neither legislation nor judicial pronouncement. It existed before the foundations of the world. It forbids the murderer to slay that he may plunder. It sternly says to the criminal: 'Thou shalt not profit by thy deed of violence.' This law we now invoke. Paul Breen was suspected, apprehended, accused, indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced for the murder of this child — this Edith Breen. Died before maturity? Yes — she was murdered in her youth, murdered by the son of her mother that he might inherit the wealth to which nature herself had denied him title. Gentlemen, murder is always foul and abhorrent; but it is most foul and most abhorrent when greedy avarice sharpens the knife and cool calculation drives it home."

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Mr. Carrington paused and searched a moment among the papers that lay before him. Then he in turn handed a document to the clerk.

"Your Honor," he said, "we offer in evidence a copy of the record in the case of 'The State vs. Paul Breen,' with certificates of his sentence and incarceration thereunder."

Then, turning to John Strain, the attorney for the defendant asked in scorn:

"There is no dispute as to these records?"

"None," Strain answered politely.

"The Court takes judicial notice of the proceedings," the Judge added.

"Then, we rest our case," was the reply; and Mr. Carrington sat down.

John Strain advanced with another document.

"Your Honor," he began, "we offer in evidence a full and unconditional pardon, granted and issued by the Governor of this State to Paul Breen, and covering the alleged crime to which my learned friend has seen fit to refer. I will not, in making proffer of this paper, trespass upon the indulgence of the Court by rising — or descending — into the regions of oratory. No one disputes or denies the justice of the legal maxim so forcibly presented by the defendant's eloquent counsel; but it is the experience of all mankind that even the judicial ermine or the sacred function of the jury is no war-

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ranty against human error. The same collective wisdom that created the maxim he has quoted also has told us that it is but human to err. And, therefore, the makers of our laws have entrusted to the chief ruler of the State power to annul the processes of its courts. This power has been exercised, and Paul Breen stands before you recreated by the same legal authority that — erroneously we believe — destroyed him. Yet we do not claim that this recreation, this pardon, could have higher sanction than the right. We admit that the criminal should not profit by his own wrong. We reply only — 'Here is no criminal; here is the victim of a judicial error.' That error admitted of but one correction, and that correction has been applied. Paul Breen comes before this tribunal a claimant of his rights as an innocent man. He offers in evidence his pardon, not as a defence against the accusation of crime, but as a reply to the assertion that he is incapable of denying the crime. He admits that he should not profit by a crime; but he denies the crime. The pardon brings him before you cleared of condemnation, not of guilt, if guilt existed.

"Prove the guilt, and we admit it a defence to our claim to the property. But plead only the record, and we rejoin with the pardon. Technically speaking, your Honor, we offer the pardon in bar of the judgment of conviction as a disqualification;

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not as a bar to an offer to prove a crime as rendering the one who committed it incapable of profiting by it. We stand or fall by the maxim they themselves have invoked. The pardon has made the conviction a nullity. It cannot be pleaded as a proof of moral guilt. *Non constat* but that it was known to the Governor to be a judicial error."

"We are willing to meet that issue right now," said the attorney for the defendant, with a venomous smile at Strain.

"I shall object," Strain went on tranquilly. "We do not claim to review the trial, and we do deny your right to review the pardon. Let your judgment-record and the pardon be considered a satisfied equation. We deny the guilt, and object to the offer of the judgment-record as competent to prove it at any period subsequent to the issue of the pardon."

John Strain resumed his seat, with arms folded and eyes fixed on the judge. His Honor was silent for a moment or two, drumming on his desk noiselessly. Then Mr. Carrington, after a whispered word with Adolph, craved the indulgence of a brief consultation with his client. Strain gave a sigh of relief as he heard this request; for no one in the court-room, unless it was the judge himself, knew with what slender confidence he had urged his last plea. But now it seemed as if its adroit appeal to

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Adolph's passions would succeed, despite Mr. Carrington's keen comprehension of its sophistries. And so, indeed, it proved.

"What, Adolph," protested that adroit counsellor, when he was apart with his client, "you don't mean to let them throw upon us the burden of proving Paul Breen's guilt; why, it is preposterous!"

"I do mean exactly that," replied Adolph doggedly. "How else then can it be determined? Am I the sort of a man, standing as I do before the public as a candidate for political preferment, to take this immense fortune on a technicality? I want this thing settled now and for all time. Why, I have been preparing for just such a contingency. Our evidence is much stronger than the people's case at the former trial; besides, I have got something up my sleeve that will sicken them, if only Strain gives me the lead, as I think he will. We want to crush them, not elude them. So go ahead, I say, and call their hand. Of course, the issue is Paul's guilt. He murdered my little cousin; and, damn him, he must bear the consequences!"

"Very well, Danton," agreed Mr. Carrington with a smile; "perhaps audacity is our best policy after all;" and the next moment, with courtly phrase, he was thanking the Judge for the indulgence accorded him.

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"This is an extraordinary case, your Honor," he continued, "extraordinary in the desperate devices resorted to, first to liberate this criminal and now to enrich him; and what might otherwise be deemed an extraordinary remedy becomes a most proper one, if only through applying it the truth can be made manifest beyond hope of future cavil or contradiction. Therefore we rely upon no legal form, no mere legal defence. We accept the gage that has been thrown at our feet. Though this learned Court could need no assistance from us in piercing through the pretence that would make this conviction a nullity, we will take the affirmative. We will prove, here and now, that Paul Breen is not an innocent man, claiming his lawful right. We will prove, once for all, that he is a red-handed murderer, striving to filch the fruits of his crime. It is my client's wish to avoid the benefit of technicalities. It is my client's sacred duty to affix once more upon that dishonored brow the brand of Cain. I yield to his noble resolution. This is no longer a question of titles, of goods and of chattels; but a question whether or not this plaintiff, not having the fear of God in his heart, but moved and instigated by the devil, did murder that poor, innocent, unoffending child, Edith Breen, his half-sister. If he did, if this jury shall decide as another jury of equal intelligence and worth has already decided,

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then it follows, as an inevitable consequence, that the inheritance shall remain where it now is, in the legitimate line of descent; and that the doubly-convicted miscreant shall wander over the face of earth, unharmed of men, yet finding God's punishment harder than he can bear."

With the aplomb of a true lawyer, Carrington turned from his impassioned peroration to settle as far as possible with the opposing counsel what facts might be taken as proved. After a brief talk, Mr. Strain thus laid their conclusions before the Court.

"It is the desire of my client," he declared, "to bring out as fully and completely every fact, bearing in any way upon the mystery of the death of Edith Breen, as even our adversaries can pretend to wish. As to certain of these facts there is no dispute. It is admitted that this young girl's body was found amid the débris of the accident to the cars. It is admitted that a trunk belonging to the plaintiff was in the same car, and that this trunk was shipped by him, directed to himself at the Central Station in Carteret. It is alleged on the part of the defendant that my client murdered the unfortunate girl, and that her dead body was concealed within that trunk when he took it from the house where they both lived. This we deny, and put them upon their proofs."

So, at length, the issue was joined; and Adolph

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Breen, as he took his seat by Mr. Carrington's side, felt his heart beating exultantly, his blood throbbing fiercely, with the joys of confident conflict and the lust of final triumph. As he had told his lawyer, he was convinced that his case, as prepared, would overwhelm Paul. This, in itself, was a sufficient reason with him for throwing away, with apparent recklessness, an advantage in the struggle. But a secret, more intimate purpose had urged him on with far greater force. His proofs were to win for him not only an estate, but a woman's heart. Though he counted on a legal verdict, that was as nothing compared with the verdict he should also win from Constance Sanderson's eyes. Unless Paul was destroyed before the tribunal of her soul, mere material victory would be empty and inane. For such a stroke he would joyously assume any risk; and for it now he had come out into the open and flung away his shield.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE STORY OF THE WITNESSES

"We call Mrs. Philip Breen," said Mr. Carrington; and Adolph led his mother, in her widow's weeds, to the stand.

Mrs. Breen's evidence was largely a repetition of what it had been at the former trial. She told of various conversations which seemed to show a lack of sympathy and even a certain antipathy between Paul and Edith. She repeated with more detail her own talk with Paul, wherein he had said: — "She interferes with my whole life. She is an obstacle. Let her keep her distance, if she knows what is good for her. I will not be responsible if she does not." She described Paul's angry manner, and Edith's fright at his threats. She then testified to his lack of feeling and strange behavior when the girl's death was discovered.

"Mrs. Breen, what was the nature of the work done by Paul in the attic room?" John Strain asked on cross-examination.

"I don't know exactly. Something scientific.

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He was always interested in such matters. He did experiments with chemicals and with an electric battery, I think."

"Was there anything dangerous about the work he did?"

"I think he had some explosions. I remember hearing some noise of that kind several times."

"Did he ever speak of any danger from them?"

"Yes, sir; he asked me to warn the servants and the family not to meddle with his things. He said there might be trouble if they did."

"Did he speak especially of any member of the family?"

"Yes; he spoke of Edith. He said she was a Paul Pry, and asked me to forbid her to go to his attic room."

"Did she go there after the warning?"

"I don't know. She used to run about the house everywhere. She was always restless and curious about everything that went on."

"You speak of her as restless. Did she ever do anything to show this disposition?"

"You mean about running away?"

"Anything you remember."

"Well, she ran away from home several times, even when she was little. Then she wouldn't stay at school, but ran away, and came home again."

"Was there any reason you can give why she

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shouldn't have been contented at home? Did she complain of ill-treatment in any way?"

"No, sir, she seemed to wish to go about and see things, that's all. She was adventurous and bold."

"Now, returning to the day you heard her spoken to angrily by Paul Breen, where was she then?"

"In the attic somewhere."

"Near the laboratory?"

"It may be; I don't know."

"Did you think at the time that Paul was threatening her, or that he was warning her of a possible danger?"

"I don't remember. I thought he was nervous and impatient with her."

"Because she was near his room?"

"I object," interrupted Mr. Carrington. "It is incompetent."

"Your Honor," Strain argued, "this testimony is offered to prove threatening language. I wish to show that the language was a warning rather than a threat. The words themselves are equally consistent with either theory, and I wish therefore to show by this witness that the manner of their speech or delivery was such as might go with a warning. She has already sworn that such a warning was in my client's mind."

"I think the question is proper," said the Court. "Go on."

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"Did Paul speak as if he was threatening Edith, or as if afraid she might meet with some danger?"

"I thought he was afraid she might be hurt, and wanted her to keep away."

"That will do," said John Strain; and Mrs. Breen left the stand.

Matilda Grafton, after some preliminary testimony as to her duties and employment as a maid in the Breen household, came to the morning of the death of Edith.

"I was working," she said, "in the third story of the house, and in the room just below Mr. Paul's labertory, as they called it. It was very early, about an hour or hour and a half before breakfast, maybe half past six or so. I remember the day well because of what happened after. I heard a bumping on the stairs, and, as the door wasn't quite shut, I looked out and seen Paul Breen taking a trunk down. I was surprised to see him that early. He must have gone out the front door 'cause I seen him after on the lawn going to the stables. I was at the window. Then he came out in a light wagon, and went down the road. I seen him no more that morning, 'cause I went to breakfast in the kitchen."

"We have already admitted the shipping of the trunk," said John Strain.

"A moment, Mr. Strain," returned Adolph's

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counsel. "This witness can testify to another matter. Now, Miss Grafton, if you please, just tell the Judge and Jury, in your own language, what you know of the clothes in the suit-case."

"Yes, sir," Matilda answered, brightening visibly. "I was a-coming to that. About maybe a week or so before that day, I was looking in the attic for a strap Mrs. Breen wanted, when I saw an old suit-case that used to belong to Mr. Paul and I tried to take one from off it. Well, the case came open, and I saw there was a suit of clothes in it. I spread them out, to see had they been forgotten by somebody, and I saw they was nearly new."

"What size were they?"

"Too small for a man like Mr. Paul or Mr. Adolph, and too big for a small boy. They was dark gray woollen, and nearly new."

"Do you think you would know the cloth if you saw a piece of it again?"

"Yes, sir; I'm 'most sure I would."

"Then examine this piece," continued Mr. Carrington, handing her a bit of gray cloth. "Is that like it?"

"Yes, sir; I know it by the queer red-line check."

"I shall offer this bit of cloth in evidence presently," said Mr. Carrington.

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"Let me see it," demanded John Strain. He took the cloth, examined it, and then returned it, asking, "What do you wish to show?"

"This," Mr. Carrington answered, "is a piece of the cloth found upon the body of Edith Breen after the accident. It will be identified by the coroner and by Mr. Adolph Breen. We shall show that a suit made of this cloth, and similar to the one described by this witness, was bought by Paul Breen a short time before it was found on the body of Edith. Call Mr. Zeiger."

Mr. Zeiger came to the stand, identified the cloth, and a button that was attached to it, as part of a suit made according to measurements furnished by Paul Breen. He read the measurements from his books.

John Strain turned to Paul and inquired in an undertone whether he remembered anything of such an occurrence. Paul tried to think, but could say only that he had often executed commissions for Edith at a time when she was interested in work among the poor. Upon this hint, Strain cross-examined Mr. Zeiger and brought out the fact that Paul had ordered various garments from him, at different times, and that these were such as would fit persons of widely differing dimensions, and that some of them were fitted by him to poor men or boys who had been sent to his shop to be measured.

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The witness was then dismissed from the stand and gave place to Adolph Breen.

Adolph's demeanor was serious, and he testified with much care, choosing his words deliberately, but yet with apparent frankness and fulness. He told of his attendance at the inquest, and identified the bit of clothing. He also went over again his conversation with Paul on the day of Edith's disappearance — telling of Paul's confusion, his refusal or pretended inability to account for his actions, and the fact that he had laudanum among the chemicals and drugs in his laboratory. He told of the blood washed by Paul from his head, and of the absence of any wound from which it might have come.

"The witness is yours, Mr. Strain," said Carrington.

John Strain rose slowly, scrutinizing the witness in silence. Had he followed his instinct as a lawyer he would have declined to cross-examine one at once hostile, unscrupulous and well-trained in forensic defences. And yet he was satisfied, not only from Phineas Twigg's warning, but from his own corroboration of it, that Adolph had lied in his testimony at this and the former trial. Besides, his investigations had revealed certain acts of the young man, discreditable on their face, and in any event showing a strong bias against Paul. Was it not his

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duty to bring these at least to the attention of the Jury?

"After the plaintiff's imprisonment, Mr. Breen," he began, "did you visit the prison where he was confined?"

"I did," replied Adolph gravely.

"For what purpose?"

"To see the warden."

"Did you deliver any document to the warden?"

"Yes; an order from the Governor."

"What was its nature?"

"It was an order to retain certain letters addressed to the convict, Paul Breen — so called."

"You say it was the Governor's order?"

"Yes."

"Who was the Governor?"

"You were."

"Did I sign such an order?"

"You did — in my presence."

"Did I read the order?"

"Oh, I don't know about that — you signed it."

"Who made out the order?"

"I did."

"By whose request?"

"Under my general discretion as your partner and confidant, as I have acted in a hundred other

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instances. I do not remember whether I explained its purpose at the time or not, but I will gladly do so now, if I may be permitted."

"Certainly; that is what we want."

"My purpose was to break off the engagement or connection between this Paul Breen and a young woman who was writing to him. She had refused to look upon his conviction as a cessation to their engagement, and was jeopardizing her future by her infatuation for him. As you, the District Attorney, who had prosecuted him, had but lately stood in the position of her guardian, practically, such solicitude on your part was eminently proper."

"How about yourself? Had you been paying attentions to this same young woman?"

Adolph flushed angrily and glanced at Mr. Carrington. The lawyer at once interposed an objection, which was sustained.

"Now, Mr. Breen," John Strain continued, "do you recognize this book?"

Adolph took the little silver-bound note-book, and looked it over carefully.

"No," he answered, "I never saw it before; but I have heard of it. I think it belonged to your son — I beg pardon, to your client."

"You need no pardon, Mr. Breen, when you tell the truth. Did you ever make any inquiries about that book — of any person?"

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"Yes; I made inquiries of a pawnbroker."

"What interest had you in it?"

"Your Honor," Mr. Carrington interrupted, "I object to further waste of time with these irrelevant questions. What foundation has been laid for them?"

"This book," Strain contended, "was the property of Paul Breen, and was pawned on the day of Edith Breen's death. It was redeemed, when put up for sale, by the fiancée of Paul Breen, and this witness has shown great eagerness to obtain possession of it. We hope to trace the book from the hands of Paul Breen to the pawnbroker, believing it will throw light on the case. As evidence in chief it may be out of its order; but it certainly is competent as showing the witness's bias, his credibility —"

"With my counsel's permission, I will gladly answer the question," Adolph broke in, with a bow to the Judge and to Mr. Carrington. "It was this way. I happened to see the young woman who redeemed this pledge coming from the pawnshop, and out of this same solicitude for her — to save her from so disgraceful a suitor — I made inquiries as to her errand."

"Did you take any steps toward gaining possession of this book?"

Adolph scowled, and then said: — "I

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took such steps as I thought would be effective."

"Did you try to steal it?"

"Come, come," the Judge protested mildly, "you must know this is irregular, Mr. Strain."

"I withdraw the question," said Strain. "Of course I can't expect the witness to incriminate himself. Now, Mr. Breen, as a result of the death of Edith Breen, and the conviction of Paul Breen of her murder, what became of the estate of Neil Breen?"

"It was vested by the Courts in my father, and by his death became my property."

"You still hold it?"

"I do, by the laws of God and of man; and Satan himself shall not prevail against it."

"You renounce the devil, but not his works, hey? Well, that is a comfortable theology. Now, Mr. Breen; one more line of questions. When did you first learn of this tragedy?"

"The murder or the accident?"

"Edith Breen's death."

"On the day of the accident to the train."

"In what way?"

"By a telegram from my father."

"Where were you when you received it?"

"At my office."

"Were you at home the night before?"

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"I was."

"Were you at breakfast in the Breen house that morning?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I rose early, and went to the office, getting my breakfast here, in Hamlin."

"Was that usual with you?"

"No, it was not."

"Then why did you do it?"

Again Adolph looked appealingly at his counsel, who thereupon interposed an objection. Strain began to argue the point, but was cut short by the Judge, who directed the witness to answer. Adolph bowed submissively, but with apparent sadness.

"As a good citizen," he said, "I obey the mandate of the Court; though I had hoped, as on the former trial, this evidence would not be extorted from me. I was wakened early that morning by the sound of two persons quarrelling, on the stairs, and then up in the attic. Such contention was not infrequent in the house, and I was weary of it. As I did not care to hear the matter threshed out at the breakfast table, I hurried to town for the sake of my own personal comfort."

"That will do, Mr. Breen," said Strain peremptorily; and Adolph started eagerly from the stand; but his counsel restrained him.

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"Wait a moment," Mr. Carrington directed. "Your sensibility is both natural and admirable, but it must give way to the cause of justice. Who were these two persons who were quarrelling — that is, if you knew by the sound of their voices?"

"I knew only too well. They were my little cousin Edith Breen and this plaintiff."

"Do you know what time it was?"

"It was shortly after daybreak. The house was very still. I do not think any other person in it was awake."

"That is all," said Mr. Carrington.

"Do I understand, Mr. Breen," rasped Strain's strident voice, "that you refrained from mentioning this circumstance at the last trial, and hesitated about mentioning it now, out of a feeling of consideration for the plaintiff?"

"Yes; I could not forget that we were brought up together, and that I was taught to love him as a cousin."

"Exactly. Then will you kindly tell me how you reconcile such amiable consideration with your conduct on the night of his recapture, when you urged me by every worldly inducement to let him rot in prison, although I had just explained to you his true parentage; and passionately declared that, above and beyond every other reason, you abhorred him?"

"If you refer," Adolph answered calmly, leaning

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forward to make his statement the more emphatic, "if you refer, as you must, to the occasion when you admitted that you were going to pardon your son, because you considered that there would then be a good speculative chance of recovering Neil Breen's inheritance for him, I deny that I ever said or thought any such thing." And, as John Strain gave an impatient gesture of dismissal, he stepped from the stand, outwardly impassive, but exulting inwardly over the successful execution of his secret plans.

"We rest our case," announced Mr. Carrington; "that is our defence."

"Then," said the Judge, "since it is about the regular time, we will take a recess until three o'clock this afternoon."

John Strain welcomed this truce. Indeed, if the Judge had not granted it voluntarily, he himself would have insisted upon it. He hurriedly bundled his papers into a green bag, and then glanced over the Court-room. "Come here," he called to Tancredi; and led the way into a consultation-room.

"Things are going badly," he declared, when they were alone. "Adolph Breen made a good impression, and managed to strengthen his side. We know he lied, of course; but what difference does that make, when the Jury respect him, yes, and as I can see, sympathize with him. Oh, I blame my-

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self, I can't blame myself too strongly, for letting him draw me by the nose against my better judgment. I was too anxious; it is the old story, a man who tries a case in which he is personally interested has a fool for a client. But this is no time for post-mortems, and I have no use for them anyway. Our fatal defect, after all, lies in Paul's brain. What is the use of building up pretty structures of circumstantial evidence as long as he is unable to account for the gap between his past and present memories? Why, isn't it natural for the jury to say, in the light of all the evidence, that he did commit the murder, even though they are convinced that he does not remember anything about it? The one vital, essential element of our success, then, is the restoration of his memory. I have appreciated this all along, and again and again a desperate, yet possible remedy, as a last resort, has occurred to me. Listen, now — you're a scientific man, a student of psychology — and tell me what you think. By God, if there's a living show, I'll take it!

"My theory is that Paul was injured in some way while busy with the last experiment in his notebook. Suppose we recreate the situation at that very moment? Suppose, on the theory of the association of ideas, we have him as a witness, in open court, do those very things — what then?"

"I have heard of such a thing," Tancredi an-

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swered slowly; "but in this case there might be serious danger in carrying out the experiment. Paul Breen was no parlor scientist — he handled strong forces. There may be an accident — "

"What, if that formula is executed accurately?"

"No; I should say if done accurately it could be done with perfect safety. But the slightest slip — "

"So much the better," cried Strain; "then I can assure the Court that the thing can be done with perfect safety. As for the slightest slip, that's just what I am looking for. I believe that he made one, then; I hope that he may make one, now."

"It might be a dangerous accident," Tancredi warned.

"How dangerous? — what will be the radius of danger? Can you tell that? Are there fumes that will stupefy the court-room? Will there be a roof-raising explosion? You have examined the data. You ought to know what are the possibilities. Tell me, then."

"I should say there are possibilities of a slight explosion. If Paul makes a mishap in his experiment, he may be shaken somewhat — not enough, I should say, to injure him permanently. And certainly those a few feet distant would be safe. I shouldn't hesitate to take my chances with him. Such risks are often assumed in laboratory work. But suppose there is an explosion — what then?"

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"Why, I hope that the very convulsion which brought his memory to a stoppage may set it going again. Isn't that possible?"

"Possible? Yes. Probable? No. There may be one chance in a thousand."

"And, without that chance, he hasn't one chance in a million of success. We must take it."

"It is Paul who will take it," objected Tancredi, "and at a very serious risk."

"He invites it. He has assured me that he would gladly risk his life for vindication. My God, man; why shouldn't he? Think of all he has at stake. Think of the hopeless future if he now loses."

"How about the legal question?" Tancredi asked. "Can you get permission?"

"I think so," the lawyer answered. "Our adversaries are over-confident. They will give us free scope. I'll invent a theory within the precedents, never fear, if you can get together the material for the experiment. Can you do that?"

"Yes; give me a little time — an hour will do — and I will bring the necessary apparatus — "

"Go ahead then," interrupted John Strain vehemently. "Do your part; I will do mine, and Paul will do his. A chance in a thousand is enough, since justice is on our side."

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CHAPTER XXX

A CHANCE IN A THOUSAND

PAUL BREEN walked up and down the corridors of the Court House during recess, attended and protected by gloom. The evidence of the morning had been a revelation of hopelessness to him; for, up to the beginning of the trial, he had kept faith in his heart that the heavens themselves would fall if necessary in order that justice should be done. Now, he had such illusions; he saw himself as others saw him, defiled, indelibly defiled. The consciousness of innocence gave him no consolation; that was an old story, while this was a new hurt. Does a wound pain the less because it is undeserved — especially a wound in the heart?

He saw John Strain swinging up the stairway, burly, aggressive, bovine; a pile of law books under one arm, a green bag, stuffed with papers, in his other hand, his broad shoulders shrugging as if eager to be jostled. "Father," the young man cried.

The Governor stopped short at this unwonted

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salutation, the fierce light of his eyes softening with tenderness. "Well, my boy," he replied.

"It isn't well," Paul retorted. "I am scourged, condemned, crucified, for a second time. Oh, I don't blame you — you are doing all you can; I blame fate, I blame life. I am accursed, accursed, from the hour of my birth — "

"Paul, Paul, that hurts me far more than it can hurt you."

"But, outcast, accursed thing that I am," Paul went on impetuously, his mind dwelling, as often happens in time of mental distress, not on the greatest but the most important and recent of his ills, "I'll not permit it any longer to be said that this trial is nothing but a strike, an extortion, an attempt at robbery under color of law. I'll wash my hands of any interest in the Breen estate; I'll renounce my poor rights before the whole court rather than — "

"It won't be necessary," said John Strain gently, "I'll fix that all right for you. I was just thinking that some such shot might take a little of the fog from the air. But there's another thing, Paul. This fight is neither lost nor won as yet. Before the finish, as I have hinted, I may have to put you in jeopardy of your life. If I do, Paul; if I do — do you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? Why, it is the one favor I have

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entreated you to grant. Give me the chance to dare and to do at any cost. Forgive you? I bless you."

"You don't understand, Paul," persisted the Governor, strangely shaken. "If I do this, it may be too late for me to ask you as now — do you forgive me?"

"God knows I do, father," Paul responded, comprehending and compassionating.

John Strain lost no time in opening his case. Hardly had the Crier rapped on the desk and proclaimed "The Court will be in order," than he was on his feet, pushing his head forward in rude salutation, and uttering the perfunctory words "May it please the Court; Gentlemen of the Jury," in those rasping tones which so often before had changed premature triumph into consternation by their inherent and vital force.

His manner, however, was moderate enough. He didn't propose, he said, that the issue should be clouded longer by the false claim, so persistently urged by the defence, that this suit was brought to rob Adolph Breen of his lawful inheritance. The rightful title of the Breen estate, it was true, was an essential element of the case; but the real issue was the innocence or guilt of the plaintiff. He, therefore, begged to file with the Court the plaintiff's stipulation, signed also by himself, that, in the

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event of recovery, every dollar should be devoted to public or charitable uses.

"We object, your Honor," Mr. Carrington exclaimed; "any such document is utterly irrelevant, raising a false presumption —"

"You're too late," Strain chuckled, as the Judge shook his head doubtfully. "We don't care a rap whether it is received or not. The deed is executed, done — *functus officio,* in a word — just as you are."

"Strain and Justice," sneered Adolph.

"Yes, Strain and Justice," the Governor thundered back; "and do you beware, young man, lest you be crushed by the weight of that combination, which at last has been fairly and squarely made. The hour is approaching when Justice, through her agent Strain, shall expose your foul, malign conspiracy — where, then, will be your quips and sneers? Look on this picture, gentlemen, and then on that; on him who has filched and withheld, and on him who would have generously shared and now disdainfully repudiates — and say which one is the villain and which one, the victim!"

Having sent these words home vociferously, despite impassioned objections, John Strain resumed his normal tones, and outlined briefly his case. He told of Soci'ty's meeting with Edith, and the providential pawning of the note-book in the child's

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peculiar nickname. He admitted frankly the witness's lack of character, but asserted that the corroboration was complete and that Truth was no respecter of persons.

"Having proved, then, Gentlemen," he concluded, "that Edith Breen was alive and well, hours after the time when it is claimed her dead body had been shipped in the trunk by the plaintiff, we shall show, as well as it can be shown in the exceptional circumstances of the case, just what were plaintiff's pursuits and purposes at this crisis of his life. It is well known to you all, and the fact has already been attributed falsely by the defence to a base cause, that the plaintiff has suffered serious mental impairment. The sight of the note-book, which belonged to him, has already stimulated his memory to a degree; but we hope to still further refresh it by the association of other objects with which he was also then familiar. This association, too, will be corroborative in a way. For instance, he claims he can translate and materialize the hieroglyphics with which, as you see, this note-book is filled. Now, should he succeed in carrying out their meaning in your presence, it having been shown that the book has been withheld from him and that he has had no chance before to experiment, why, then we may fairly argue that his reviving memory is reliable. How far this refreshing process will work,

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which, as the Court will advise you, is a procedure legally sound through a hundred years of precedents, we do not know. That rests with God, who can restore even as he has taken away, and whose aid you have invoked in rendering your verdict. But, we believe we shall show that the plaintiff, so far from having any thought or concern about Edith Breen at this time, to say nothing of plotting murderously against her, was engrossed body and soul over investigations which might have proved, and may yet prove, in the dawning of better days, a blessing to mankind. What we want is truth; and we shall use every means in our power, under the law and his Honor's learned rulings, to establish it."

"Let him go ahead," whispered Mr. Carrington to his client. "The more rope Paul Breen has, the more surely he will hang himself. I have some smattering of scientific knowledge, and I believe that I shall be able to show on cross-examination that his experimenting was the pretence you claim it was, designed to veil his desperate schemings to get possession of the estate."

"Perhaps so," replied Adolph uneasily, as he realized that he was caught between the horns of a dilemma.

The plaintiff's case proceeded expeditiously, though somewhat tamely, until Daniel Mattice, alias Soci'ty Dan, was called to the stand, when an

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amused ripple stirred the audience. And, indeed, there was, at first sight, something comical in the contrast between his shrewd, droll face, and the way he shrank back in the chair, as if striving to make himself as small as possible; though his similitude to a hunted beast at bay might have occurred painfully to a discriminating mind.

There was sharp objection at once by the defence to his testifying on the ground of the witness's notorious disability, for the purpose, of course, of making the equally notorious fact of his pardon by Governor Strain a matter of record. When his legal rehabilitation had been shown, Soci'ty told his story simply and well, though he doubtless had private reasons of his own for feeling ill at ease.

Mr. Carrington wasted little time over cross-examination.

"How many times have you been convicted?" he asked.

"I kinder disremimber, sir," Soci'ty answered. "A score or more mayhap, not countin' the drunk-and-disord'lies."

"Not important enough to impress your memory, hey?"

"It was me pusson, sir, thet was impressed radder than me mem'ry."

"Exactly; now you met the plaintiff in prison?"

"Yessir; we wore bot' doin' time; fulfillin' the

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law, you might say, while odders, far wuss, was filled full of the profits."

"And he told you his story there?"

"Yessir; he told me all about the snide game thet had been worked on him."

"And then you made affidavit to some of the statements to which you have just testified?"

"I tuk me oat' for sure, sir."

"And, when his application for pardon failed, you aided plaintiff to escape, and diverted the detectives from recapturing him at your own expense?"

"I did give 'em the double-cross for a fac'; but the old poppy-guys, whose clothes we prigged, stud the expinse."

"And you did all this for a stranger without hope or promise of reward?"

"Joe and Jake, the State guns, copped the reward, sir."

"Do you know the nature of an oath?"

"Well, I guess! It's straight goods, without nothin' up me sleeve, s'help me!"

"That will do," concluded Mr. Carrington, with a shrug of the shoulders, and a meaning glance toward the jury.

Poor Soci'ty! No wonder that the recollection of divers offences, ancient and recent, still unrequited, had perturbed him. As he stepped gingerly from the stand an officer in plain clothes tapped him

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on the shoulder, at the same time extending a warrant of arrest for larceny. This stroke had been arranged by Adolph, and its effects were manifest in the way the jury drew together and nodded their heads; though Mr. Carrington, whose ability and character alike constrained him to avoid unprofessional tricks, pursed his lips disapprovingly.

"I only call attention to this flagrant breach of the rights of a witness, your Honor," said John Strain, "as an illustration of the desperate tactics to which the defence has been forced to resort."

"Rights be damned," shouted Soci'ty, his audacious self again, now that the apprehended bolt had fallen. "The unly rights an old lag like me has is wrongs. Thet for your Coorts; and thet for your patter about Christun refarm!" And he made a gesture of defiance, more forcible than seemly, as he was led away.

"Constance Sanderson," John Strain announced; and, as he conducted the girl gallantly to the stand, the court-room was again stirred, but this time with admiration for her lovely presence and calm, gracious bearing. Adolph leaned forward, staring avidly, fiercely; while Paul, his lips white and set, bowed his head, hiding with his hand the bewilderment and pain of his eyes.

There was the hush of expectancy as Constance, in a natural, conversational way, told of her friend-

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ship with Edith, and how the child had delighted to call herself in her home by the fanciful nickname of "Ed Flyaway." The incident was so simple, and yet so far-reaching, even as mighty machinery may be set in motion by the touch of a tiny finger, that, as she concluded, there was a general sigh of satisfaction. Again the jurymen drew together and whispered and settled back; while Mr. Carrington looked worried as he rose to cross-examine.

Nothing, however, could be more courteous and considerate than his address. "You will pardon me, my dear young lady," he began, "if my duty compels me to ask you some very personal questions." And Constance smiled assent.

"Very well, then; you have known plaintiff for many years, and are deeply interested in the success of his cause?"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir;" Constance answered bravely.

"Please explain to the jury just how close and intimate are your relations with him?"

"We are engaged to be married."

"You love him?"

"I do, I do; most dearly."

"And because you love him, you believe him to be innocent?"

"Because I know him, I love him; and that knowledge assures me of his innocence."

Mr. Carrington smiled indulgently, as, with a bow

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and a wave of the hand, he dismissed the witness. "There spoke the heart, not the mind, gentlemen," he said, turning to the jury.

"And where else should we look for truth," demanded John Strain, "than in the pure heart of a good woman?"

"It's a pity you didn't look for it there some years ago," Adolph murmured audibly.

With head proudly erect, and eyes undaunted, Constance moved up the aisle to her chair. Only, as she passed Paul, her hand trembled, as if she would stroke his bowed head. But Paul did not respond to the subtle magic of her emotions; he was not even aware of her proximity. As in a dream, he had listened to her evidence, and alone of all the audience had remained incredulous. Constance love him; they engaged to be married? Impossible. Why should she love him, then, and when had they become engaged? In that time of waking, which he could not remember; in that life of activity and light, before he had withered into a shade among shades, a vision of the night, uncertain of all things, but most of all of himself? Perhaps so, perhaps so; but, if so, what difference could it make? It was the old Paul Breen whom she loved; it was the old Paul Breen to whom she was engaged; not his ghost, not his ghost. He must keep himself remote, he must flee to the uttermost parts

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of the earth, lest that fond, innocent heart should be chilled with the horror of discovering what he really was, and how he really felt.

From such wild, incoherent musings as these Paul was roused by the sound of his own name. "Paul Breen, Paul Breen. The plaintiff will take the stand," the old Crier kept repeating. It was the trumpet call to battle; it was the supreme moment of test for which he had prayed. With every nerve and muscle tense with resolution, in some way, he knew not how, to redeem, to restore himself, Paul obeyed.

"Do you remember the day in question?" John Strain asked after a little, referring to the date of Edith's death.

"I do; that is, parts of it," Paul answered.

"Why not all of it?"

"My memory is defective; I do not know from what cause."

"Have you ever seen this note-book before?"

"Yes; it was mine; I was using it constantly about that time; I was using it that very day."

"What were you doing?"

"I don't know; but I believe the book would aid me in knowing."

"When did you see it last?"

"About six months ago, when you showed it to me."

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"Well, what occurred then?"

"You asked me if I could read the cipher. I said yes; that I believed I could not only read it but could do what it directed. You wouldn't let me try, and I haven't seen it since."

"Examine the book. Are the writings and symbols in your hand and made by you?"

"Yes, every one of them."

"Well, read them. Tell us what they mean."

"This is a record of some experiment in physical science that I was making," Paul said slowly, like one translating a foreign tongue. "As I read, the memory comes back to me that I was intensely interested in my work; I believed that I had discovered something of inestimable benefit to mankind. I don't know what it was; but here is the last formula I made, calling for an electrical motor, retorts, flasks, tubes, the following acids —" And, as Paul enumerated the articles, Tancredi, sitting near-by, jotted down the list and then nodded intelligently to Strain.

"Your Honor," the Governor explained, "I have already provided some of the paraphernalia in use by physicists, and it so happens that the very things required are at hand. I propose, then, to have them placed on this table, and give the witness the chance to refresh and verify his memory. I am advised by a competent authority that the execution of this for-

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mula can be made without danger, and you will readily see — "

"Hold on there," Mr. Carrington interrupted, rather perfunctorily. "We shall have to object I suppose; though mainly because it is a waste of time. We have no fear that this intelligent jury could be taken in by such hocus-pocus."

"Let me lay the foundation fully for my offer, then," Strain rejoined. "Now, Mr. Breen, what effect do you think it will have upon you mentally to carry out these notes?"

"I believe, I feel, I know," Paul answered passionately, "that it will cause me to remember; that it will restore to my mind what is now a blank, my actions on that fatal morning; that it will enable me to disprove this horrible charge, to set myself right before men — "

"There it is, your Honor," said Strain, clinching the point; "we offer to put our witness to this test, having scrupulously refrained from trying it before now, for the double purpose of refreshing his memory, and of strengthening what he has already remembered. If there is any serious question of our right, which, in any event, would not be raised except by those afraid of the truth, I propose to establish my position by a long line of authorities, taken from the highest courts of this country, Great Britain, and under the Roman Code. If one of the

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bailiffs will kindly bring these volumes from the library — "

"Oh, Lord," Mr. Carrington exclaimed pettishly, "if Brother Strain is going to cite cases, we'll never get through. In the interest of a sane brevity, your Honor, I withdraw my objection. But, out of ordinary humanity, I desire to warn this immaculate plaintiff that his precious discovery, if anything, is likely to prove a boomerang. I never did like to help even the worst criminal to convict himself."

"Humph!" growled John Strain. "Then you ought to stop practising law."

Even while argument was pending, Tancredi had arranged the apparatus on the table. At a nod from the Judge, Paul now stepped from the stand, and began his manipulations. There was something in his movements, deliberate, automatic, that bore a similarity to a somnambulist working in the dark — something mysterious, uncanny, that quickened the pulse and bated the breath and brought the silence of suspense brooding solemnly over the court-room.

From her chair, far back on the centre aisle, Constance Sanderson watched the experiment with the torturing intentness that waits upon a crisis in disease. John Strain, leaning against the rail, folded his arms and compressed his lips with the grim resolution of one who knows but accepts a desperate chance. Tancredi's bright eyes twinkled with in-

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creasing wonder and admiration as he followed Paul's deft hand; and yet his cheeks paled as he foresaw what a slight mishap might bring about. Mr. Carrington, laboriously contemptuous and indifferent, still showed something of the apprehension of a skeptic at strange rites. The jury bent forward as one man, fully prepared, in their dull, self-satisfied sapiency, to estimate justly any occult demonstration.

But the one, above all others, the most interested, the most agitated, was cool, resourceful Adolph Breen. He alone knew from Edith's parting words what was likely to happen; and yet, if he protested, what explanation could he give, since the only explanation credible was confession? Like many another of adroit, fertile mind, he was physically a coward, timorous of natural forces, apprehensive of pain, faint and weak-hearted at the very thought of blood. Gradually, primeval fear overmastered him. He sprang forward, crying: — "Stop him; he is mad; he will kill us all!"

As Adolph thus rushed upon Paul, a tube of acid in the latter's hand slipped and broke. There was an explosion, dull, heavy, but extremely limited in scope. When the smoke lifted, the two young men, separated by such deadly antagonisms, lay side by side, ghastly and bleeding.

For a moment panic raged in the court-room,

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with the jury swarming over the back of their box, and the audience upsetting benches and chairs and trampling on the feeble in a mad flight for safety. Then the sharp raps of the Judge's gavel, the determined resistance of the bailiffs and the exhortations and assurances of the lawyers that all possible danger had dissipated, brought about a shame-faced return; and decorous order again prevailed.

Constance Sanderson, in her unselfish devotion, had sprung forward, resolved to share Paul's fate, whatever it might be; but, seeing him struggling to his feet, a weird, awakening expression spreading over his face, she sank back again into her chair, her hand pressed tightly over her wildly throbbing heart.

Tancredi, with a physician's keen eye, had at once perceived which one of the two young men was the more grievously hurt. Instantly he was at Adolph's side, forgetting, in the demands of duty, the claims of friendship. "This man is dying," he cried to the court-officers. "Cover him up and bear him into the next room."

As the officials bent to their task the court-room was panic-stricken again by fearful screams, sharp, broken at first, then becoming more articulate. "Stop, stop!" came the unearthly cry from under a rug hastily thrown over something too shattered, too mutilated, for human sight; and those who were

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bearing Adolph away were constrained to obey. "I am justly punished," the voice went on, gaining in awful intensity as it lost in volume. "I encouraged Edith to run away that morning; she hid in the freight-car, and was killed by the collision. I envied the fortune — I hated Paul. Constance, I love you — forgive — "

The screams ended in a gasp. Once more the men hastened with their abhorrent task; but now, no voice, enthralling through agony, halted them. No, no; silence attended that poor thing that had been Adolph Breen, as it was borne away, — that merciful silence which spares the dead, when to speak is to condemn.

Meanwhile, Paul remained standing as he had risen — an impressive figure, with arms outstretched, chest exposed, face uplifted; oblivious of the present as he was receptive to the light of the past. John Strain, with forceful gesture, at once held off the officious, and compelled silence and stillness.

The glow of intelligence on Paul's face, from growing in intense inquiry, changed suddenly into a look of acute alarm. "Edith, Edith," he cried loudly; "Keep away, get back for God's sake, or you'll be hurt!"

Judge, jury, lawyers, spectators, all yielded now to a more supine attention than they had accorded

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"'GET BACK FOR GOD'S SAKE, OR YOU'LL BE HURT!'"

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to John Strain's imperiousness as, thrilled and breathless, they realized that, at length, after more than two years, the young man had uttered the words of warning which his brain had formulated the instant before its power of memory had been paralyzed by an explosion in his attic laboratory, in the old Breen home.

"Oh, I see it all, I see it all," Paul continued, his wild mien, his stare of amazement, holding all transfixed as at a rising from the dead. "I was working with these very same things — something was wrong — I was seeking it. I looked up — there stood Edith — a little table filled with chemicals just tipping over in front of her. I started to cry out, to spring forward — then came the rushing, crushing, crashing wind — the blackness, oh, I was buried in it; that heavy, confining blackness, from which now I am emerging, I am escaping! And the trunk — that old trunk of mine? Why, I had shipped it hours before. It contained another set of apparatus for this very experiment, which it was my purpose, which I had planned, to submit, of all things, of all persons, to my good friend Tancredi there. And I was so bashful, so timid, so doubtful of success, so fearful of ridicule, that I had kept my discovery a secret from everybody. Constance, Constance; don't you hear, don't you understand? I remember, dear, I remember everything that hap-

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pened! I remember — Oh, God be thanked — I remember and feel my love for you; I remember and bless your love for me!"

Again there was tumult in the court-room, though now it was the outburst of joy, not the frenzy of panic. But Paul heeded not sign nor sound — the outstretched hand, the hearty congratulation. Brushing aside those who thronged to do him honor, he darted up the aisle to where Constance sat, radiant amid her tears.

The cheering grew more and more vociferous as the jury, standing in the box, acclaimed a verdict for the plaintiff, as John Strain and Mr. Carrington clasped hands with the good feeling of worthy foemen, as his Honor himself sprang from the Bench and joined in the general rejoicing. But, irrepressible and exuberant as was this manifestation of human delight in the triumph of Justice, it respected, it kept aloof from the sacred spot where Paul Breen knelt beside Constance Sanderson, his soul gaining security of happiness from the benediction of her pure eyes.

THE END.

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